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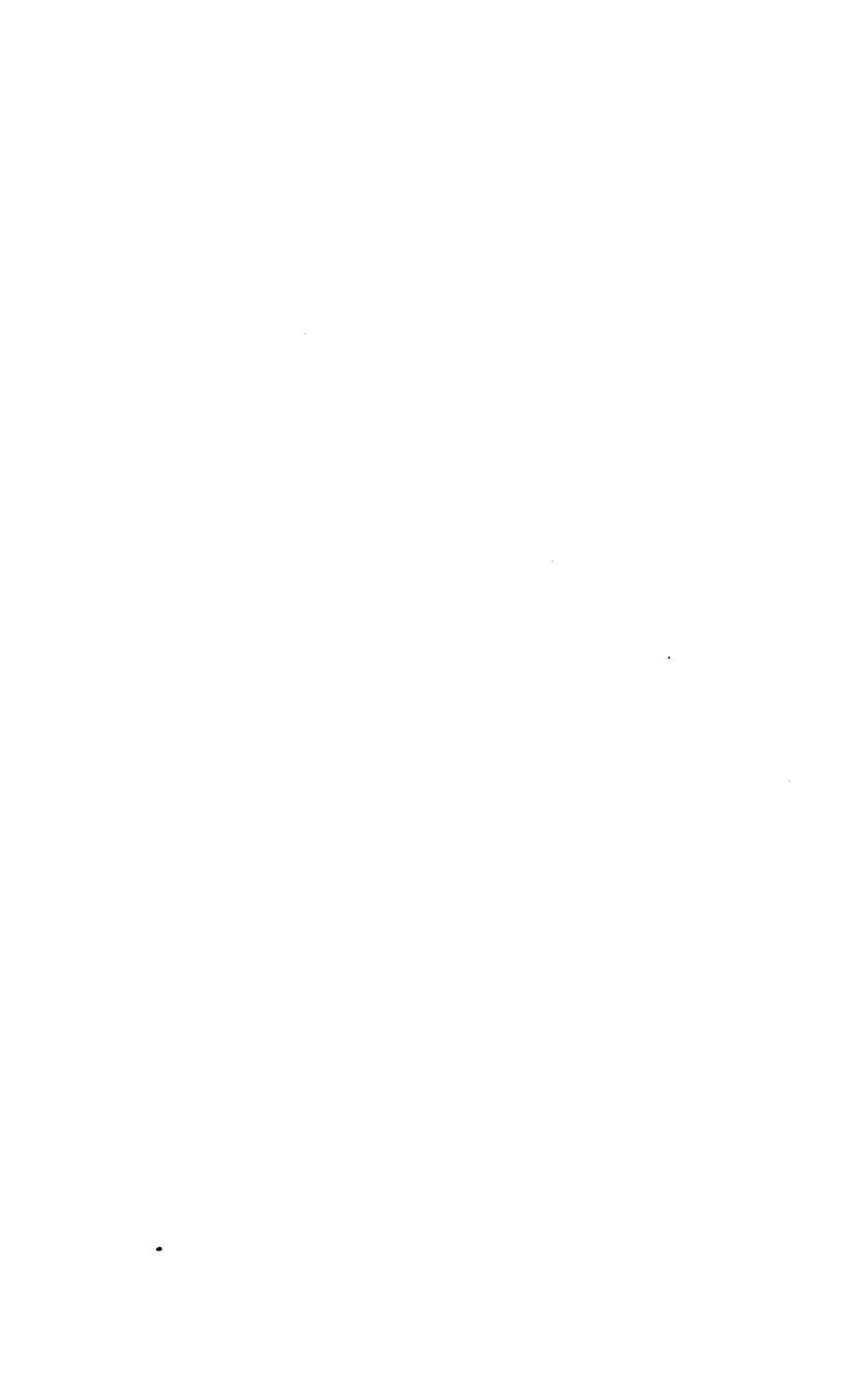
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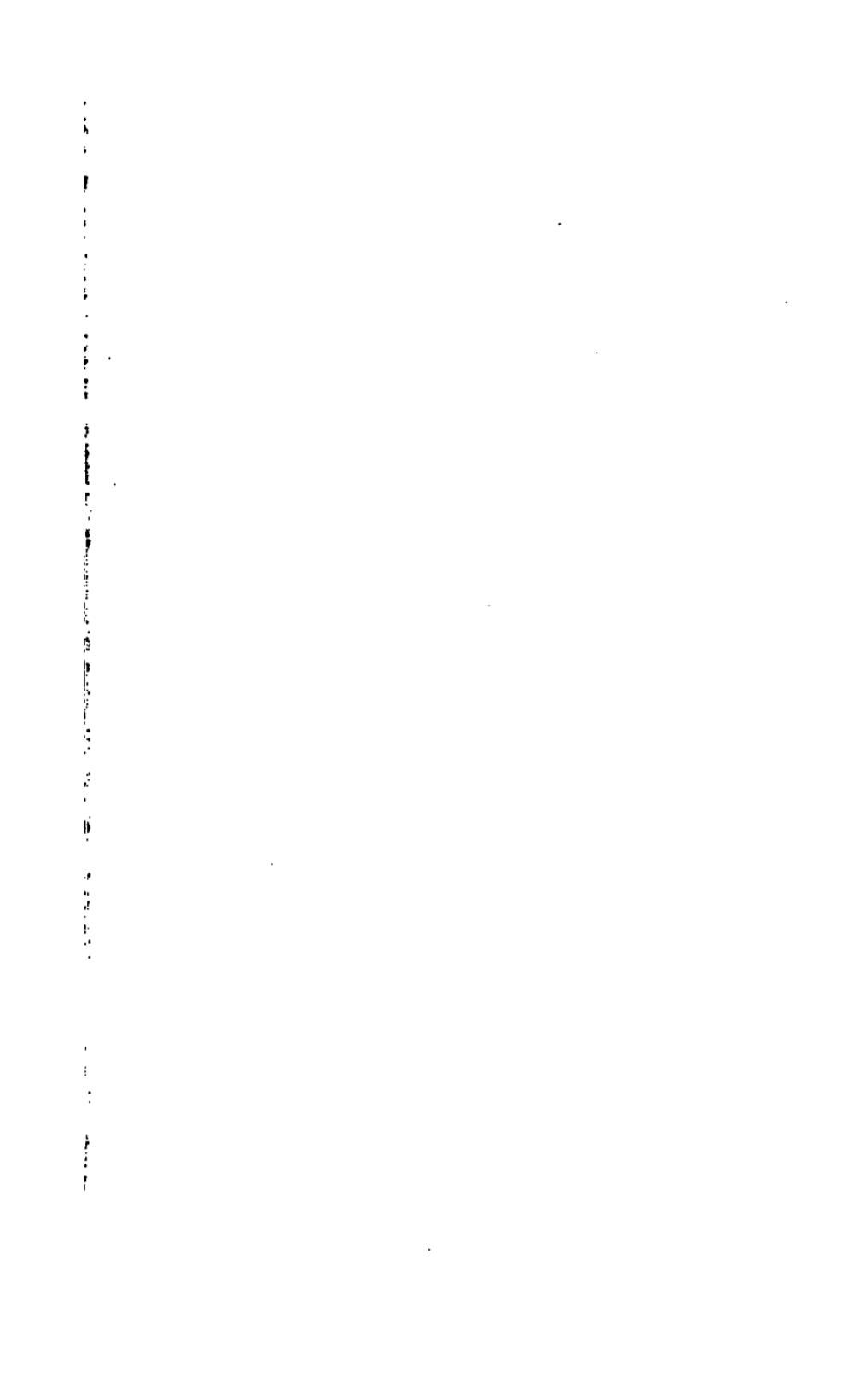
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IROKA: TALES OF JAPAN



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IROKA: TALES OF JAPAN

By
Adachi Kinnosuké



New York
Doubleday & McClure Co.
1900

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ADACHI KINNOBUKE



Fire money.

return

13 APR 1912



TO
WALTER R. LAMBUTH

*WHEN I think of it, I
have said everything
in the title of the
book. Only . . .*

*“Tales, my child, mere tales,”
my mother used to say; “but
history would not give you so
true a truth.”*

*And she told them, there by
the little bed of mine, in order
that romances and dreams
might kidnap her child and
away with him far into the
fairies’ homeland.*

*Years and years ago!
But her voice is still ringing
a silver bell on the outermost
verge of my memory’s horizon.*

*I do not know why I have left
those days so far behind me : I
am such a dunce, and perhaps
that is the reason. Whenever
I succeed in proving, however,
that I am a fool, and when my
heart takes unto itself the hue
of the clear sky—which is none
too seldom—then I steal an
excursion or two backward
through the sins, storms, tears
of this dirty struggle called life.*

*And here are the results of
my wanderings, and I offer
them to you.*

ADACHI KINNOSUKÉ.

AT THE HERMIT'S PERCH, GLENDALE,
CALIFORNIA.

*The Twenty-second day of the Ninth Moon
of the Thirty-second Year of Meiji.*

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NOTE.—Some of these stories are reprinted from *The Criterion*, *Ainslee's Magazine*, *Town Topics*, *The Overland Monthly*, *Poet-Lore*, and *The Los Angeles Times*.

Under the Cherry Cloud of
Sumida

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that the people insisted in catching him at a wrong place, by a wrong end. If one were to catch a cat by her tail he would be made to see very soon that the tail was not the right place. Even a kettle, if you will be blind and hold it by its bottom which is always turned to the flame, your hand will have an emphatic mark of your blunder. But our Asada, being nothing but a divine painter, was not, it seemed, allowed to be as vindictive and high of temper as a cat or a kettle.

For example, once he painted a mood of a servant girl with a heavy bucket of water. The burden gave a sad defect to the balance of her shoulders and her unoccupied hand seemed as if it were desperately trying to seize a bulk of air far away. A very few strokes of his brush went to the making of the face of the poor servant girl—a couple of strokes for her eyes, one for her nose, another for her mouth—that was all. It was there, however, the perfect picture of that sarcastic cynicism of a working girl. “I work from the death of the stars to that of the sun, 365 days

every year. What is the result? This bucket of water is as heavy as it ever was and my mistress is as cross as sin. Life is a practical joke of the gods. Our tears, curses, sweat, groans, laughters, fits—all are for the amusement of the bored divinities!"

I say all these were there in that sketch—yes, perfectly. People did not see these things, however, perhaps because they were there. But they wanted to see the photograph of a servant girl with the right number of hairs in her eyebrows, with the exact diameter of the pores marked carefully in her skin; and the photograph of every muscle in her body. They wanted to see even the dirt on the water bucket. They wanted to see these things because—in their way of thinking, and in the name of wisdom, when were they ever in error?—the artist ought have had them. When the infallible public did not find the things which it looked for, it called him names.

"Very well," said he to himself and to the world at large, "understand me well,

good people, I am painting only for my own amusement, for my own self. I will, therefore, do as I like!" And he did. He was a happy fellow because he wanted the world to forget him, and the world is always pleased at that job, finding it not the hardest thing under heaven.

But it was within him, that flame which something higher and brighter than the sun had lit in his soul, and whose marks escaped now and then, through his fingers, through his brushes. And those who had in their make-up anything to be scorched, when they came in touch with his canvas, they were scorched truly. But his pictures were as rare as the visitations of a good fairy. And one must indeed be an intimate friend of his to prevail upon him to show one of his "colour-studies" on paper. And for a long time I thought that he treated every mortal alike in this excessive modesty. But I was greatly in error. And O Chika was the occasion of the discovery of my mistake.

III

O Chika is the name of the daisy blooming beneath the dewdrops gathered by the cherry petals of Sumida, and when one day, tired of books and sick of life, I deserted my den and dragged my cane on the Sumida bank, it so happened, in the motherly thoughtfulness of Providence, which we fools are so apt to call "mere chance," that I stopped at the tea-house.

A cup of tea of that classic warmth of colour and of the traditional flavour with a cherry petal boating upon it, is always good. Far better, however, it is when it's served as the mirror of a charming smile on a pretty face which bends over it. And it pleased my weakness to render unto this unpretentious female Cæsar, whose realm is as wide as the human heart, what was hers.

"I regret that I am not a painter," said I, letting my eyes say the rest.

"Oh, honourable guest, I thank you!"

she said, naïvely answering to my implied compliment. “But I am sure you can paint, because you look at me with the same kind of eyes as his.”

“His?”

“Oh, I have a friend who paints.”

“Well, he is an enviable fellow, I am sure.”

A pleasant laughter—and, like a many-coloured flash, she disappeared behind a screen. A moment later she brought out a roll of paper. I unrolled it.

“What is the honourable guest smiling about, may I know?”

“Well, I believe,” said I, “I have the honour of your friend’s acquaintance.”

“A—ah?” in the voice of a dreamer frightened out of sleep; and then recovering, with a smile; “the honourable guest is joking?”

“Perhaps.”

He had painted her, not exactly as she was, but as he had seen her—felt her. I mean that his eyes were, for any of the divinities he adored, a mount of transfiguration. The picture was not a picture

of a girl—rather it was a translation in colours of the height of his imagination's flight.

The girl in the picture was serving a cup of tea to an owl. That easy grace which Nature gives to a girl in the self-forgetfulness of her hearty merriment, a bit of coquetry, a trifle of condescension, the amiability of one who is sure of her conquest, were all put on the curve of her lips, on the uplifting of her eyelids. And as if the ambition of the painter were not satisfied with the beauty of his dreams, he placed, doubtless in order to bring out by contrast all the delicate charms of the maid, the most grim of philosophers in the absent-minded stare of the owl's eyes.

"Do you like the picture?" asked I of the girl.

"It is very pretty, I think—but—"

"Oh, but how much prettier is the original than—"

"Oh, do you think so?" Her eyes were round. "Really, when he brought it to me, I looked at it a long time. Then he

told me that it was my picture. ‘Well,’ said I, and I recognised myself for the first time.”

IV

A change—a very natural one to me, because I knew a thing or two; a startling, strange one to the world—came over our friend, the painter.

“We knew it was in you, old fellow!” I heard a Bohemian say, in congratulating the rising reputation of the artist. Here is his retort:

“Why, then, in the name of heaven, didn’t you draw it out of me before?” He was so solemn that his friend had to laugh to make matters even. Within a year and a half, Tokio believed him every inch a god, and a certain school of critics, seeing that Asada was too big for the world, was already preparing for him a nameless, blank tombstone—just like the one on St. Helena.

Then, one fine morning came the ru-

mour of his marriage. His foes sneered at it and enjoyed their "I told you so!" better than most women. And his friends opened their mouths as if they were inviting him to bury himself therein, and said with the first breath which came back to them:

"After all a genius is a queer sort of a fool!"

V

He dropped out of the world as suddenly as he was introduced to the drawing-room of fame. This time his friends had no trace of him. And I, filled with the spirit of public interest, and in the name of Nihon's art, started out in search of the lost genius. I took a short cut. I went after O Chika. And, as is usually the case, I had no trouble in finding her mother and her home. As for the daisy herself, it was quite another matter.

"Do you have any idea where she is?"

"Yes, sir; she went out boating with

some girls. Shirobei, our neighbour, took them out. There was his friend with him also."

"May I ask who this friend of your neighbour is?"

"Yes, sir; he is a clerk, I think, in a clothing store in Tokio."

"Thanks. By-the-bye, I saw some pictures, two years ago, don't you remember, at your tea-house on Sumida bank. Do you know what O Chika-san has done with them?"

"A—ah! so you are after the pictures also, young master? So many persons came to ask after them, and because the honourable masters wanted to buy them, O Chika sold them—almost all of them."

"So!"

"Yes, sir; maybe there is one left."

She rose, went to her bureau, and brought me a roll. We unrolled it together. Painted upon it was a dilapidated tramp, sitting in the dust of a highway, and the threads of his rags were slipping and flying away from him in the wind, as if they were thoroughly ashamed of the

forlorn wretch. He was talking to his dog. And the dog had a look upon his face which became better a potentate of an absolute kingdom listening to the prayers of a beggar. At the bottom of the roll were these words, written in the stormy vigour of a certain pen of which I know a thing or two:

“My Last Picture.”

“It was sent to her just about a month ago, now,” said the old lady.

“When is O Chika-san coming home? I want to buy this picture if I can.”

“It’s past time now. She may be here any moment.”

Fully two hours’ patient waiting. And in an hour or so after the night had fallen, she came back—gay as a bird.

When I spoke of the picture, she consented at once to sell it to me for a price I am ashamed to mention here, and added:

“Isn’t it very strange? He was very nice and sweet to me a long time. Then one day he came down the road, but when he was within a hundred feet of me, he turned round sharply, all of a sudden, and

went away. I did not call after him; I never thought of it. Since then he never came. He went away without a word. After about a month—wasn't it, mother? —he began to send me pretty pictures and letters which we could not understand; but our neighbour Shirobei, he read them, and he said they were very pretty."

"May I ask what were you doing when he came down the road the last time?"

"Oh, I was with Sadakichi, that young fellow you saw just a minute ago—he works in a big Tokio store—well, we were lying in a clover field near here and laughing. I did not see him till he was very close to me."

"I see."

"Are you going already, young master?"

"Yes; good night!"

VI

Honour, wealth, art-enthusiasm had been blowing on their big horns to summon Asada. He did not appear. What could a fellow like me do? I heard that O Chika had married the clerk of the Tokio store, and they together moved to Kioto.

As for the genius, we heard nothing about him. His parents thought that he was out on his pilgrimage to the art treasures of the empire.

VII

Five years after his disappearance.

The artistic public of Japan had cried after him, at his loss, but just like a baby howling after a piece of candy, it exhausted itself in its lamentation, and by-and-bye became somewhat sleepy and

seemed to have dozed off. But there were a few unfortunate ones who could not, do what they might, forget him.

On my way home to my native town, I stopped at the Capital of Flowers, as Kioto is called..

It was in the season when Nature becomes absolutely wild in her prodigality, even in that island home of extravagancy —I mean in matters of flowers, dreams of purple haze, of perfumes, of coquettes both of feathers and dresses.

One who is thinking seriously of departing to eternity ought, by way of preparation, to spend a few spring seasons at Kioto. No, time does not seem to exist there, and indeed, one who wants to be intoxicated by the *saké* of vernal sunbeams has no time to spend in thinking of any such thing as Time. The whole city decks herself in honour of the flowers, and you will see every street of the ancient capital turn into an avenue filled with a dense population in the exaggerated butterfly wings called the sleeves of the Japanese *kimono*.

And I abandoned myself completely to

the voluptuous seductions of the Kioto spring. I went from one *meisho* to another. I flirted with every cherry tree that was a-bloom and left my tribute in classic couplets penned on a rectangular card, pendent from their branches.

Colour and perfume; love and *sake*!

Late in an afternoon I was at the Kiyo-mizu Temple.

For centuries it had been the rendezvous of pious pilgrims, and the pilgrims of art, of philosophers, poets, and especially of lovers. The temple is built on the waist of a hill. One of its verandas looks down into a court many hundred feet below. They called the veranda "the Lover's Leap," because ever since the temple stood there came to it lovers who were unhappy in this world, and, true to their religious convictions, they took their leap from that veranda into eternity to enjoy in the realm beyond the bliss of love which this life denied them. They say, and I do believe them, that if the bodies of all the fair girls who have thrown themselves down from the veranda could be gathered in a heap,

they would more than fill the chasm. But the reason why the people had not closed the veranda or shunned it altogether was because there was something there that would more than erase all the unpleasant associations. And if you were there with me on that evening, watching the twilight come home flying on her purple wings to perch upon the cherry trees, and could hear the far-away melody of the unseen belfries as it tumbled into the valley over the heads of pines, as if it were the lullaby to put the twilight to sleep, then you would not hesitate to agree with me. Upon my word, it deserves an ode, a hymn. But in that divinely enticing languor, such a task as composition is hardly thought of—at least by such an idle hand as mine, and I sighed my compliments and appreciation of that lyric of a view.

“Jumped?”

“Who?”

“Where?”

“When?”

“Where is he now?”

There was a great confusion. And the people rushed from all quarters to the other end of the veranda. It seems that even while I was admiring the evening fading on the pink veil of cherries, there was a man on the other end of the veranda around a corner who thought, for some reason or other, that life was too distasteful to him.

“He was a crazy young fellow,” I heard a voice say; “I have seen him hanging about the place for some time. Love? Oh, no! The idea is absurd. He was in miserable rags, and I know he must have starved a long while. No love affair in his case at least!”

The following morning I took up a newspaper. A glance at it—and it fell from my hands.

On the first page in large letters:
“The Discovery of the Long Lost Painter!

“Asada—a mangled heap under the Cherry Cloud of the Kiyomizu Temple!”

And the whole page was devoted to him. It told what a transcendent genius he was,

how the volcanic zeal for his art had been too much for his frail body, how he had lost his mind; and it commented exhaustively on the relation between genius and insanity.

The art-loving people of Kioto buried him with all the expressions of their tender respects. Over where he rests is a marble shaft with some fine sentences cut into its sheen. Once he had cried for bread, and now they gave him stone—for such is the way of the world.

As I watered the last resting-place of my comrade with a dewdrop straight from my heart, my thought wandered back to the avenue of cherry cloud of Sumida, to the tea-house and—to her. I knew she was somewhere in the city of Kioto, and could not refrain from the idea that the very marble with his name cut deep into its snowy light would move at the sound of her voice.

With the help of a register and the police it was not difficult to find her. I recognised her at the first glance. She had grown very much stouter; her mar-

riage with the clerk, her kitchen work, and the long afternoons at her washtubs agreed with her perfectly. She gazed at me a while, ransacking the bag of her memory. At last she recognised me. With both of her plump bare arms in the air, and her eyes merry and round with satisfaction at recalling a face of so long ago, she cried:

“A—ah, young master, I know you!—I know you!”

I was shocked. But I had the foolhardy persistence to stick to my plan.

“Your friend Asada—do you remember him? He died yesterday in this city——”

“He did! Is that so? Ha, ha, ha! Well, I’m sorry . . . he was such a funny man, wasn’t he, though?”

Sangatsu Sakurano Sakuji-
bun

Sangatsu Sakurano Sakuji-bun *

A Japanese Love Story

I

The beginning of it all was on a dream of a fête day of the *sangatsu sakurano saku-jibun*. That, as you know, is also the season when some other kind of flowers open. And it came to pass in the dovetail work of Providence, there by the shrine of Ujigami, that they met for the first time, Hosoi Shizuma and Yoné.

They were as young as the year. But those were the days—now so old—when the hearts of people flowered, like *mumé*,

* The third month when the cherry blossoms blow.

very early in the year. There was one thing which was not very kindly to them; for that was the time when the *chonin* (man-of-market) was classed, in the contempt of the public, just above the *eta* (the pariah); and wealth did not serve, as it does to-day, for the men of lower birth and humbler intellect as their balloon.

An old adage in Japan: “Mind and money do not go together!”

And Yoné—for Fate is ever jealous of the fair—was a daughter of a *chonin*.

And Hosoi was a *samurai*.

And Love—why, he has no caste at all.

And that is just where the trouble came.

II

At home, when they were back from the fête, Yoné’s father said to her mother:

“What a handsome man-of-hue he is getting to be—the young master of Hosoi, I mean. Almost as fine a fellow as your

husband was when you married him, wife?"

"Hum!"

A pause—then she said:

"It's just that way with that blood-stained family of Hosoi. Their fine looks are not deeper than their skin, and you would say that they are Buddhas. . . . But don't talk to me! Ghouls, demons, that's what they are, I tell you!"

In order to understand her, you ought to know one or two things. About two generations before this—when *samurai* used to call their swords "souls"—Yoné's grandfather on her mother's side, touched the sword of Hosoi's ancestor. The *samurai* saw that it was intentional. Now, a touch of a *chonin* was thought to be the worst stain on the purity of a *samurai's* sword. The *samurai* was, perhaps, the most sensitive being under the sky, and he could no more stand the stain of that type on his sword than a high-spirited woman the loss of her virtue. The result was that the sword of Hosoi's forefather was washed in blood at once, on the very spot.

They talked some more, the parents of Yoné.

Yoné listened.

III

“An impossible case!” mused Hosoi in his study.

“Impossible?” Love has no such word in his vocabulary: so he danced in Hosoi’s eyes and just laughed at him.

As for Yoné, she prayed Musubino-Kami in particular, and all the other eight million gods in general. And why should not all the gods and Buddhas help her? To be sure, it was no small thing that she was asking of the divine. Let a man jump over—in those days, I mean—the wall between the *samurai* class and *chonin*! If he succeeds, then let him try next to leap over the moon; and I am sure that he will find the latter the easier of the two. But Yoné thought—very properly, too—that the gods and Buddhas were made for that sort of thing.

When, therefore, her faith in the omnipotence of the deities was thoroughly established in her heart, and the doubt as to the success of her love affair was a mere cloud of yesterday, there came a pair of large tears into her eyes, bright and pure as her hope; and a star stealing through the fissure of the *amado* fell into them and turned them into wedding jewels.

The night was far advanced.

Through her tears looking at the star—she was sure it was her guardian star—she smiled, on her lonely bed. Oh, never in all her days had she been so lonely as on that night. She fell asleep. In her dreams, however, she was not alone.

IV

Scarce four months later. By the sea:
“I can but worship you from afar.”

“Hush, Yoné! My lotus-faced girl is as pure and white and noble as Fuji-yama. A Buddha should worship her, since she is too good for the adorations of mortals.”

“ Oh, no! I dare not ask for too much. Let me see you now and then—I won’t come too close to you. For, do you know, whenever you smile on me as sweetly as you are doing now, I am afraid that the gods will punish me for being too happy.”

“ What nonsense! ”

The twilight was falling upon them, and the moon was weaving a curtain of silver muslin with the sea fog.

V

“ Something the matter with her; I’m dead certain of that! ” said the tradesman’s worthy wife in one of her prophetic moments.

“ But what colour do you make out your fox to be, wife? ”

“ Love foolishness, my dear! ”

“ Well, I’ll be—— ”

It was very plain to see, and no wonder! She could not hide anything, the blushing neophyte! She made eyes at the flowers

in the garden, without knowing it; and a note of a nightingale made her quiver.

There was a terrible confusion in the tradesman's house one night. A fire broke out not very far from it. The mother sought her daughter in her room. There was something there that made the mother forget the fire.

The bed was spread on the soft matted floor, to be sure, but it was empty as a cicada's shell.

Some time afterward:

“Daughter, my daughter, where in the world have you been? You!” cried her mother, when suddenly she came upon Yoné in a dense cloud of smoke, some distance from the burning house. Yoné stammered out that she had fled at the very first alarm of fire. In her excitement she had forgot to arouse the house before she left it.

Aye! But there was too little sign of disorder in her toilet and dress. But a woman!—has she ever forgot her appearance under any circumstances?

VI

Yoné shrieked.

But what really happened to her was that she fell into her mother's arms, that was all—nothing so terrible in that, surely! But the time and the place justified her hysteria.

It was after midnight, and she was climbing half way up the bamboo fence near the back door of her house.

Her parents could get nothing out of Yoné. Oh, they punished her, coaxed her, threatened her, and all that—in vain.

To the great surprise of Yoné, her parents allowed her full freedom. There is something ticklish in that sort of liberty—that is to say, to those who are world-wise. And Yoné, simple as she was, did feel rather uncomfortable. But what could she do? Youth, poetry, passion were her masters, and they are the greatest cynics on earth, who laugh at all precautions.

“What must he be thinking of me—of my absence?” was her thought, her only thought, night and day.

VII

“Doubted? Oh, no! How could I, and live?”

“Oh, my poor, poor lord! Your pain was cruel, so cruel, I know!”

“But what a paradise after the torment!”

The voices were quick, passionate; nevertheless, they were those of devotees who worshipped. One might have said that the lovers but articulated the wild music of their heart-throbs. That was the only thing which Yoné’s father, who played a spy on his daughter, could catch distinctly that night. The rest was the sweet wedding of murmurs, like a concert of sighs.

On his way home, Hosoi did not know that he had an escort. The young *samurai*, masked, disappeared through a wicket.

His escort remained out in the night. There where he stood, ten thousand shadows of the universe tumbled down in a heap about him. He outraged the solemnity, which was neither of man nor of things, with his antics. His gestures were monstrous. As for his facial expressions, they were far more hideous, as ugly as the ugliest children of imagination, because one could not see them, and had to guess at them.

When you remember what Hosoi's ancestor had done to that of his wife, do you wonder that the poor man-of-market lost his head when he found that his daughter's lover was a Hosoi?

VIII

One corner of the *dozo* (a thick-walled godown) of the *chonin*, on the following day, was turned into a Spanish cloister of the sunless days of the Inquisition.

Yoné's arms were fastened at her back; and the stout hemp rope had no heart. It

was flung across the horizontal beam over her head, and its free end was wound about a cylindrical roller turned by a crank.

“Consent, will you?” shrieked her mother, savage as a tigress.

At the obstinate silence of her daughter, she turned the crank. The girl was suspended in the air, her toes barely touching the earthen floor. The entire weight of her body, therefore, was on her twisted arms. Oh, they billowed, twitched, and twisted in the paroxysm of pain, those exquisite lily arms of hers! There were no tears in her eyes, into which blood rushed in tongues of fire. There is something of a martyr in every woman. Yoné had a great deal of it. Her black hair fell in a huge, unconfined mass, full of light, upon her snow-pale face. One might have said that heaven’s penman had spilt some ink on the pale book of death.

Not quite eighteen, with the features which looked like the composite photograph of poet’s dreams—in short, nature’s aristocrat! Many (and surely Hosoi was one of them) who had seen this refined

bloom on the coarse stalk of a tradesman's family, had felt as if they had found a chaste lily where they had looked for a tadpole.

It is true that time and again faint groans escaped her as the rope tightened; her features twisted also. But her stoicism was Buddha-like.

"You filthy beast, you! Will you consent—yes or no?" cried her mother, more furious than ever. "Will you—yes or no? Answer! Why don't you answer me? You unclean thing!"

The crank turned with a fearful sound, like that of the smashing of bones.

The plan which Yoné's mother proposed, and for the execution of which she demanded the girl's consent, was this:

Yoné should keep the appointment on that very night; allure her lover to the very verge of the cliff where there was a stool-like rock, and, in the midst of her love-making, step behind him and lean on his shoulders—a common attitude with the Japanese lovers—and then suddenly push him violently down into the abyss.

All of a sudden, the girl who had been so stoical and stone-like, gave way.

She consented. .

On the following conditions:

That she should be allowed to leave her lover on the verge of the precipice or make him walk to it himself; and that her mother, instead of herself, should push the young man over.

It was her mother, she argued, who should take revenge on the offspring of the murderer of her grandsire. Was it not cruel enough punishment for Yoné to witness the fearful death of her lover?

It was agreed that Yoné should make her lover walk to the edge of the rock under the pretext of spying a boat, and then her mother should step out softly from her hiding place in a little cove close to the verge and dash him down the chasm.

IX

The moon was red, and, like a ripe fruit, was falling into the silver plate of the sea. Hosoi watched it from the shore, by the cove. He was dreaming sweetly, just like the moonlit sea at his feet; but his feelings were full of strange, restless thrills, just like the sea.

He did not wait there very long that night.

“*Aré moshi!*” with which Yoné threw herself at his feet and clung to his sleeves.

No passionate embraces were exchanged—for the hand of culture is very strong in Japan—even upon the fever heat of love.

“Listen, Yoné; to-morrow at the usual hour . . . will that suit you? I have arranged everything with my old nurse. We will be married at her house.”

“Oh, but——”

“Now, Yoné, you have promised me never to use that expression.”

“But what will become of you—you, a *samurai*, and marry a daughter of a *chonin*! Think of the anger of your father; your mother would die of tears!”

“Oh, you have been telling me that for these three months!”

Of course Hosoi was immovable.

The plan which he proposed, and which at last, after many long protests, she accepted, was this:

They would be married the following night. And then, immediately after the ceremony, they would leave the town and find a little cozy corner in a mountain village far away—what a dream of a happy cottage home that would be for them!

“I will gather all the wild flowers you want, Yoné. Ah! how I will enjoy chopping wood for our own hearth!” laughed Hosoi.

Their future, to him, was a perfect pastoral.

Then the girl sobbed.

Had Hosoi known how heroically she had forced back those sobs! He could

hardly believe his own ears. He took the drooping face of the girl in his hands.

“What, tears!”

But he could not imagine the cause of it, unhappy Hosoi.

Silencing his questions, Yoné said to him:

“This is our last night at this dear place, our tryst. And then, too, I am too happy. I can’t contain myself. You see I have resisted my weakness for some time. I could not stand the idea that I was to degrade you. But I feel that I can resist it no longer—forgive me, will you not? I am ready to do a very great penance for this. Oh, I am too happy: too much bliss gives me tears!”

And Hosoi, as is so often the case with lovers—supreme egoists that they are!—allowed himself to be deceived.

“Let us have the sweetest time here to-night, for we may not come back to this place again. Come!” she said, and through the dusk looked up to his face.

And the stars fell into her tears.

“Will you do me one sweet deed?”

“What is that, Yoné?”

“Call me your own wife—just once.”

“My wife? Why, my darling, precious wife! My own!”

“That is the sweetest thing I have ever heard!” she murmured softly, dreamily, as if to herself. Some more tears came into her eyes.

The hours—so sweet for Hosoi; very sad for Yoné—flew like wings.

“Will you condescend to do me another favour to-night?”

“If you but speak, Yoné, you may be sure that your lover hears a command of a queen.”

“Condescend, then, to lend me your sword, Hosoi-san—just one of them.”

“My sword? What do you mean, Yoné? My sword?”

“Yes, your *haori* (over garment) and mask also.”

“Why, of course! But tell me first, will you not, what use you may find for them? Forgive me for saying so, but there is something strange in your ways to-night. I can’t help but notice it.”

She laughed a merry little laugh—that was her only reply. One may say of it, “What a superhuman heroism!” But really that is no word for it. And yet, you hear a man say that woman is a coward.

After a little while, seeing that her lover was not quite satisfied, she reassured him:

“Oh, nothing—nothing specially!” with that brave mastery over herself which duped Hosoi completely. “You see, the moon has gone and the roads are dark to-night. If one should see that I am a *samurai*, I certainly would be safer; don’t you think?”

“Allow me to accompany you then.”
“Oh, no! If ever we were to be found together!”

“But——”

“Ah! *kochino hito*, did you not swear on that very sword of yours that you would never deny anything to me? And now, at the very first thing I have ever asked of you——”

For a *samurai* to part with his sword,

that certainly was an extraordinary thing. But was he not ready to die for her any time, and just to satisfy her whims even? And, after all, is Love ever so happy as when he is called upon to do some heroic sacrifice?

He consented.

Then she urged him to return ahead of her that night. She wanted to pray to the god of the sea by herself, after he was gone. All appeared reasonable to Hosoi.

Then the farewell.

Her eyes, half closing in transport, as if she were for an instant peeping into heaven, in spite of the bitter tears which moistened them; and that smile of hers that stole over her face—the face which was feeling the last caress of Hosoi's eyes on this earth.

They say that an atom of pleasure snatched from the very chaos of pain, like a drop of cold water on the lips of the burning, is the most exquisite. And the most exquisite pleasure was hers, poor girl!

As for Hosoi, who was as utterly ignorant of the situation as the rock by his side,

he laughed inwardly at the stupidity of the Chinese emperor who had hunted pleasure through the forest of flesh, over the lake of wine, and through the scented boudoirs of three thousand women.

“Augustly return home, safely!” said the girl.

The young man hesitated a moment, without knowing just why. Yoné was at his feet once more.

There was something in the expression of the girl which was more than enough to make the reputation of the most ambitious artist.

X

The ghost-like sea fog dropped a curtain between them.

She confined her huge mass of hair into his mask, and donned his *haori*. She threw away her enormous *obi* (girdle) and gathered her dress with her under sash. She thrust into this the sword—to die with the “soul” of her beloved at her side! It gave her colourless lips their last smile.

Then she rose.

But she fell again upon the sands where her lover had sat, and caressed the spot. And, as if she were struck with a bright idea all of a sudden, she took off the mask and let down her hair and gathered it with her left hand over her nape. Then she unsheathed the sword with her right and drew the razor-like sheen through the dark mass, like a nun shaving her head when she renounces the world. She dug a little grave in the sandy spot which she had caressed with her bosom. In it she buried her hair.

Freely, this time, for there was none by her side from whom she should conceal her emotions, she watered the grave with her silent tears. In order that, perhaps, the seed which she had buried might spring up, flower, and bear fruit in a kinder day—in the garden of her lover's memory land.

Failing to find her at his nurse's house, Yoné was sure that Hosoi would come there the very next night—and— “ If he would wait for me in vain, and in my

stead find my hair; if he would hear in the tiding of winds of my death (she thought)? If he would come to me to join me, would I not welcome him, oh, with what outbursts of joy! And will I not make him happy in that shadow-entangling world, as in this?"

Nevertheless, with that transcendental logic of women:

"May he live long and happily," was her last prayer.

Again she wept over that sacred spot wherein she had buried the glory of her youth.

She covered her head in the mask again and wandered out of the cove, almost lifeless, all in a dream. She climbed the steep slant of the rocky ledge stoopingly, with her hand on the hilt of the sword, so that the end of the scabbard might protrude from under the over garment and attract her mother's attention.

As soon as she reached the top of the ledge she made as long strides as she could. Happily, her height was not much

lower than her lover's, and the stool-shaped rock was within a few paces. She sunk down upon it. She stared into the abyss below.

A moment.

And she was knocked from behind with such violence that she was robbed of her breath.

She heard the blood-curdling shriek above her head:

“My family's foe; my daughter's tempter!”

How completely was the mother revenged!—on the verge of the cliff, smiling hideously over the abysmal grave of that shameless wretch, Hosoi Shizuma—as she thought.

Before the echoes of her voice woke from the rocky walls there came to her, mingled with the thunders of the waves storming the reefs below, accompanied with the groans, laughters, and melodies of the mysterious, a voice—a human voice—a woman's voice!

It said: “Farewell, mother!—Farewell!”

Her own daughter's voice!
She reeled.

Burning from the fire of her emotion and freezing from the ice of dread, almost at the same time; there she was, the mother! What an awful pendulum, swinging over the verge of insanity with heaven and earth in huge eruption before her eyes!

All at once a sweet, strange thought came to the stricken mother—as it does so often to a person in a spout of emotional excitement.

The demon of the cliff was playing a trick on her! So she turned to the cove, where she was sure that her daughter was weeping over the sad fate of her lover.

She called: “Yoné! Oh, Yoné-ya, Yoné-ya, Yoné!”

From dim corners somewhere came back to her the reply:

“Yoné-ya! Oh, Yoné-ya—ya! Yoné! Yoné—né—né!”

Echoes mocked her.

Suddenly her arms shot up, and as sud-

denly they came to a halt in mid air. Then not only her arms, but her whole body sunk as in a process of putrefaction.

Once more—cruel things, these resurrections with the certainty of death at the end of them!

She flew down the steep slant into the sheltered cove—but an hour ago Love's sweetest bower!

“My daughter must have fainted there,” she thought.

She forgot her atrocious act at the verge of the cliff, and with it the sweetness of revenge, tasted but for the fraction of a second, and that tragic cry, “Farewell, mother!”—she forgot all, the hapless woman.

She was there in the empty cove; felt every corner and nook of it with her outstretched arms, like a miser after a lost coin in a lightless closet.

And when, at last, the recollection of what she had done, seen, heard, there by the cliff, rushed back into her head—

She was found senseless and was taken

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home. She was restored, but neither to her home nor to the world, but to the bosom of the Buddhist temple and to the hell of remorse.

A Samurai Girl

A Samurai Girl

She is not a rose of May now—that is very certain. She was, ten years ago, its envy—this, I swear, is also very true.

From the servant quarters, a remark like the following used to reach me rather too often:

“*Domo, dreadfully evil of looks!*”

I knew of whom they were talking, and the reason why I did not burn the whole race of the evil-tongued maids off the face of the globe was simply because she did

NOTE.—A “*samurai*,” it may be permitted to explain, is a member of the highest of the four castes that existed in feudal times in Japan. He was permitted to wear two swords. The membership of this haughty and aristocratic class was based on heredity or some distinguished military glory. They never laboured, and found their pleasure in fencing and military practices. The caste-lines are now abolished legally, but the *samurai* naturally cling to their traditions with pride.

not wish it. However, her neighbours—and some of those who call themselves the friends of the family—would hesitate but very little to give you information of a very much darker hue about her.

For example:

“ Crooked of nature—obstinate as a chestnut burr—in short, a *she-oni*! ”

“ She can’t marry now, but why didn’t she? What a sacrilege to have trifled with the devotions of so many noble hearts as she did! No wonder she is ugly now—the punishment of the gods! ”

“ I wonder if she thinks herself still too good for a prince, poor girl! ”

This last was often said by the kinder hearted of her friends.

As a matter of fact a prince did ask for her hand.

And, although she did not know it (perhaps she might have suspected), it was she—not a 12.2 centimetre shell from a Chinese cannon—who sent him seeking a sad requiem in the sighs of the seaweeds at the bottom of the Wei-hai-wei Bay.

My sister—for the subject of the sketch

is no other than she—ever impressed me as a singular person. We lived in a house, strange to the eyes of the time, an old-style mansion, out of which some three generations had passed with no promise of ever returning to it; a mansion heavy with the odour of Feudalism (now gone, leaving behind it, like a forgiving lover, all its heroism and poetry), and such a one that when one stands before it, he is tempted to say: "Here, now, I have found the graveyard of History!" And my sister seemed to be the genius of the mausoleum of the past. We saw our sister very rarely in those days. I, for one, did not know where she was keeping herself or what occupied her hours. When she did come to us, she seemed as silent and as far away as the quaint architecture, of that *samurai* mansion.

The palace of Kameyama is empty now, for the prince had left it a quarter of a century ago for Tokio. On the wall of the alcove of the throne room, there is a *kakemono*. On it you can see an orchid in bloom, clinging to a rocky precipice

over a dark abyss—a piece of needle-work.

This orchid bloom, like an unexpected touch of an angel, or a sudden burst of your dead mother's memory, or any other sacred thing, never seems to fail to send a thrill through you whenever you look at it. One evening I was standing on the beach of Kobé and saw an arm of a girl quiver in the gloaming, as she stretched it after her lover, who was just going to sail to Hawaii. The artless grace which passion gave to that arm made me think of the orchid bloom from my sister's needle. A look, even a careless look, will be enough to tell you that the bloom is stretching out its head for something—for sunshine, perhaps; for something else, more likely.

Every one who saw the work took care to ask the name of the artist. And they remembered it after they had forgotten some of the names of their personal friends.

• • • • •
You know the time was in Japan—now it is all gone—when a commercial spirit

in any form whatever was looked upon as degrading. The *samurai* would have died first before he would do anything for pay; everything he did came straight out of his heart or from some sense of duty. He who sold his art work, whether it be of pen, brush, chisel, or needle, was thought criminal, and nothing was so galling to the sensitive nature of an artist as the traffic in the fruits of the garden of his art-dreams.

There were thousands of men who bought and sold in those days, but they were merchants; and they were classed, in the contempt of public esteem, just above the *eta* at the very bottom of our social ladder.

There was a suit of armour in our family. In it, three centuries ago, one of our ancestors persuaded History to print his name. That, therefore, was the greatest treasure of our house. Too sacred for exhibition, like the gods in the shrines, we were allowed to look only at the outside of the chest which contained it.

The *yoroibitsu*, or the armour chest,

used to stand on a *tokonoma*, and, as the years came and went, we were taught to pay our worshipful respect to it on the new year's day.

In my youthful days, when I used to have new wine instead of blood in my veins, the desire of my heart was to have a peep at the armour which was in the chest.

One morning I missed the chest from the *tokonoma*. Where could it have possibly gone? When I found it standing in a corner of my sister's room, I said to her:

“Our ancestor's armour, is it in that chest, sister?”

“Oh, yes!”

“Condescend to show it to me.”

“The key is lost.”

And that was all she said.

She was the eldest sister, and beside her I had two more. They were all married and happy, looking into the heaven-made photographs of their own youth in the faces of their children.

She used to correct my poems, this eldest sister of mine. And one moonlight

night, when I was thinking a thing or two which I do not care to make public, and as I could not tempt sleep inside the curtain of my closed eyelids, I went to my ink-stone. With the black-traced fancy of mine, I rushed into my sister's room to surprise her. I did surprise her with a vengeance.

She started, wild-eyed, fawnlike. And crash! down came the lid of the armour chest.

“So, you found the key!”

She did not answer.

A few days later she took to her bed. She became very ill. The physicians gave her up. One night, when I was sitting up with her, she asked me:

“Am I dying? What say the physicians?”

I told her an untruth, as a matter of course. She smiled and said to me, in a tone that sounded as if she were very sorry for me:

“Oh, I well know . . . to death fated!”

Then she fixed her eyes upon me—light-

less, tired, faded now, but which (as any of her idolaters of a happier yesterday of her bloom could have testified) used to invoke the gods, make toys of human souls; the eyes which could apotheosize or crucify a man at will. Then slowly turning her gaze toward the armour chest, she said:

“Brother, the chest is open.”

As I rose to examine the contents of the chest, after that permission from her, she buried her face in the *futon* of her bed.

• • •
Happily—or unhappily, I don’t know which—she did not die. But the contents of the armour chest I had seen already. She could not wash my memory clean of the impressions which they had made.

Nothing very extraordinary, the contents of the chest.

A pile of papers, that was all. They were a heap of receipts from a Kioto merchant, a dealer in embroidered goods. I glanced at them one by one—carefully—as if I were looking over my death sentence which was indistinctly written. At the very bottom of the pile I came to one.

It was a receipt for a suit of armour, and for the first time I saw where the ancient treasure of the family had gone.

Then it was true . . . I stared at nothing in particular, meaning to stare at the gods . . . Was it true, then, that in order that she might hold for a while, at least, our family from the jaws of starvation and poverty, in order that she might at least marry her younger sisters happily; in order that gossip may not grow fat on our family name; she, martyr-like . . . Oh, ye gods!

So then the chest was not the shrine of the ancient glory, but was the grave of her beauty, her youth, her happy days!

When I turned to her, blood shooting into my eyes in tongues of fire, she said faintly:

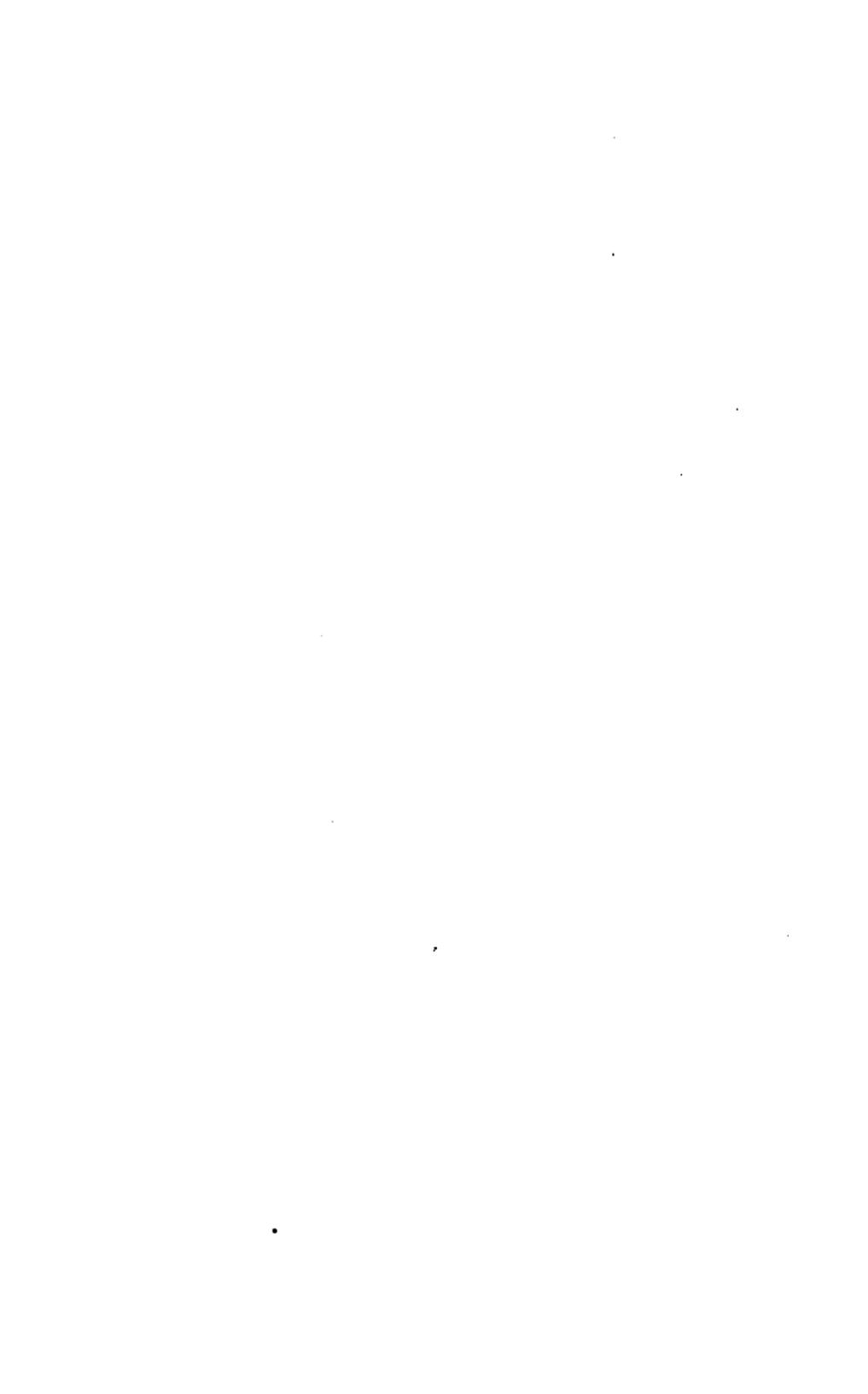
“I am going . . . and hereafter, you! . . . Brother, do you understand?”

I understood. But why did she not tell me of it before?

She told me, as I have said, that the key to the *yoroibitsu* was lost.

And I, who looked at the ravage which overwork wrought on her gentle frame; I, who could see what it had robbed her of, my once beautiful sister; have I not a ground to wonder if it were the key of life—not of the armour chest—that she meant?

A Japanese Garden



A Japanese Garden

Iriaino Kane—from a bell tower—sent a shower of silver melody across the even-tide. Dusk flew out of the skirts of the weeping willows. The mist-veiled cedar groves, the bamboo back doors of the *shoya's* (burgomaster's) house, and the love dream of cherry blossoms were altogether enough to make the figures of a mathematician spell out a poem.

Cottages with thatched caps had more kinfolks at Kameyama than any other type of architecture. But this story is concerned with just one of them. Age and rain had made quite an impression on the wheat-straw roof of the cottage, but mosses patched it over with velvet. The pillars were very far from being steady, but the worms must have thought it quite fashionable to make their summer homes therein.

A thread of pale thin smoke—a stream of curled pathos—issued from its square opening, at once a chimney and a window. One side of the cottage was screened off with *shoji*. Age had painted it, so that Imagination could come along and colour it with either a ruddy claret or an ashy coffee tint as she might choose; and something over and above mere age seemed to have treated it with a certain unkindness and made it yawn at places. “Ears in the wall,” is an old Japanese saying. The proverb might have added, “A *shoji* is many mouthed.” From those mouths a voice stole out. It was rather sweet, not lacking in the persuasive ring—a gift of a short yet uneventful life, let us say. The voice said:

“Don’t! Dearest, don’t look that way. Don’t you see how happy I am?”

And what sceptic could doubt that smile of hers?

“What’s the matter, dear? Look straight at me. . . . Now tell me, husband, what makes you think that I care anything about my old home, mother, or

the pretty things? Look here, dearest" (he who peeped into the miserable room just then could have seen a dear tableau), "haven't I got *you*? Poor? Nonsense!"

And the smile with which she punctuated her sentence! Upon such, a man looks, and farewell freedom!—a slave straightway and forever more.

"I am a cursed fool," said the man, and followed it with something far stronger. He was silent up to that time, and his eyes were fixed on—why, all sinners look in the same direction, you understand.

A silence.

"But I can't understand it," he went on.

Beneath his crossed arms his breast rose and fell; not to calm music, however. The keen intensity of his gaze was piercing, and none would hesitate to say that it could penetrate through miles of night. But where or what was he looking at—could any one say?

Then he told his wife his life-story—not the first time, of course—how he had dreamed of an ideal garden; how he had

been trained since ten years of age, under Shyungaku, Kosetsu, Meisei, and others; how he had learned to dwarf trees and "hang hypocrisy over baby cascades" (as he called it); how he had fled into the mountain because he was tired of such tricks; how he had met a hermit there; and how the prophet of the mountain had wedded him to Nature. Then he, with a deal of emphasis, told her how he had met *her* by the cascade over the Kasuga shrine; how she had caused him to fall and break the vow which he had made to the hermit never to love aught but Nature; how he was proud of his fall—as all the foolish would have said. He concluded:

"The garden is idealised here, within me—the rocks, streams, plants, and site; and it shall be realised. Look here, wife, as long as genius hides in this breast and my heart is not ashes, the day must come—yes, it must. On that day my ancestors may smile on me. And my posterity may bless me for fortune and a name."

The woman listened to this discourse, and looked in much the same way as flow-

ers do when the sun is jovial and the morning sky a great big open smile. Then she turned her beaming face full upon Kojiro. "And if you succeed, will you forsake me?" she said. Taking her in his arms, he said, "What, forsake this witch? That can never be."

The slow undulations of a distant bell went around the low eaves of the cottage, and the sleepy moon reposed quietly on the graceful branch of the kikyo tree in the yard.

• • • • •
Kojiro came home in the evening, as was his wont, threw out a handful of copper coins, and said that that was all he could make that day, and, "Here goes another day!" His little wife caressed him tenderly and encouraged him. But, poor thing! she herself had enough to do to dry her own tears. Surely they were at the very bottom of misfortune. Why does not the waned moon wax? But the fact is, Fortune is seldom hitched to the heel of catastrophe. She is a little too proud, moreover, to sell her smiles to court Sor-

row. Kojiro sat down like a millstone. Heaven help him! his heart was heavy. He did not care a whit for himself—six years of hermit life had served him well—but for that delicate bud, his wife!

Osono sat at the opposite side of the *hibachi* from her husband. The wreaths of steam rose from the kettle—the only light-hearted thing in the whole room. Osono watched them. “How well they caricature our poverty—coming out and vanishing away,” thought she. Kojiro was a stone image all the while; solemn—and everybody knows nothing is so much out of place as solemnity in a rural cottage.

Over across the green meadow they saw the elder of the village, the venerable *shoya*, coming. The snow of sixty winters weighed his frame and made a walking picture of humility out of him. His hands were clasped behind him, and he was guided and followed, almost at the same time, by his fat, white dog. Osono saw him coming, rose from her seat with alac-

rity, and covered the simple supper with what seemed like a piece of linen. She went to the closet, took out a cushion, and, spreading it on the floor, awaited the approaching elder with the best holiday apparel at her command—her sunniest smiles. After the tremendous showers of polite Japanese bows, “hais” and “heis,” the *shoya* stated in his official manner the mission that brought him there, and, after exchanging compliments in the most extravagant style, according to the fashion of the day, left the house with a slight frown upon his wrinkled brow, followed by his faithful dog. The wife raised her eyes with a tremour on her lips. Her gaze met that of her husband.

“I can’t understand this,” said he, quietly.

• • • • •
The following morning the sun found the gardener dressed in his cleanest garments. The *shoya* came for him, and they started together toward the capital of the empire.

That which the *shoya* brought to their

humble house the day before was a summons from the Lord Chancellor of the palace.

Fifty miles of rocks, dust, and mountain! At best a serious undertaking in those days, and what was left of Kojiro came, as the twilight was feeling her way, staggering back tipsy-fashion, under pines and cedars. Fatigued and somewhat pale, Osono was prepared for all this, but there was something more in Kojiro's expression. And when she asked him what saddened him so, Kojiro took out two packages of gold, and said that they were the very worms that were gnawing his marrow. She snatched the packages off the ground and said: "What do you mean, my dear husband? What, the money! What a timely shower! Does *this* trouble you? But, my husband, where did you get it?"

The gardener folded his wife in his arms. And the tenderness—ah, don't tell me that man is a brute! Many failings in his heart, doubtless, but a big slice of heaven also. He answered the awe-stricken,

question-pregnant eyes of his pretty young wife:

“Be patient, Sono, and listen to me. We reached the palace, and as we prostrated ourselves the Lord Chancellor entered, a middle-aged man, kindly of face and fine-voiced. He asked me if I were the peerless gardener of the empire by the name of Kojiro. Fear made me speechless, and yet somehow I answered that while my name was indeed Kojiro, I was a mere plantsman and very far from being anything like a superior gardener, and that it must have been through a great mistake that I had been thus summoned to the palace of the Mikado. To which he kindly answered that I need not be over-modest; that his majesty had already learned of my genius. ‘Winds that blow are not all unkindly, my garden-maker,’ he said. The emperor was quite displeased, so he told me, to find that turnips and radishes had claimed a genius of such rare order so long; and that the time of my appearance was ripe, but not too late. The palace had looked upon an uncompleted gar-

den on the south side for three generations. ‘The resources of three mountains, plants, from wheresoever they grow; the force of a thousand select masons and gardeners, and the royal treasury are all at your command. The reward will be according to the merit of your work. No genius ever lacked rank or wealth in the palace of the emperor. As an immediate relief, accept these packages with my compliments!’ Then he turned to the *shoya* and ordered him to bring me to the palace on the first of the next month. With that we were dismissed straightway.”

Osono’s eyes, her lips, her cheeks, they were as clear as the bubbles of a sunlit rill. The little speech of Kojiro was a knell to him; but to her a gospel. She stormed, and charmingly; in this, man never can hope to imitate woman. To suspend her over that most awful of chasms, anxiety, and scare the life out of her in such a merciless way—why, cruelty is no word for it! Her peroration was telling; she would nevermore love him, she said, if he were to behave as wretchedly as he had done

again (the use of the threat, let me state by way of comment, is becoming, since the day of Kojiro, as common among the Japanese women as human nature), and it left him as utterly helpless as a butterfly drunk with the dreams of flowers.

• • • • •
If the flickering pith-wick of the seed-oil lamp had an ear, there is no telling how many secrets it might have heard that night. With what judicious scrutiny Osono close questioned Kojiro about the tear (for an unfortunate drop became over-emotional and dewed the cheek of Kojiro). But, poor Kojiro! the way he abused himself was sinful. He cursed his doltishness, the day of his birth, and many other things without the slightest show of mercy, but never to his satisfaction. He begged his wife's pardon. It was a black lie, so he confessed; all that he had told her that night was a cursed falsehood, not a bit of truth in the whole thing. Oh, of course, what he had said of the little training he had received was true, but he was a common plantsman, nothing more. He had

told her those things just to lighten the despair-plagued heart of his young wife, and for no other end. The trouble came, he frankly admitted, from his extravagant and seriously criminal laudation of himself, and now, as the matter had gone so far, he wanted her to do what she pleased with him. “Wife, for mercy’s sake, fly from me. Leave this wretched rascal, leave me and fly for your life; look here!” (Then the strong man melted somehow, and clasped his hands in the attitude of prayer; his mother had taught him how to do that when he was two years of age.)

And then his wife’s answer!—contradicting everything he had said, assuring him that Kameyama was not the only place that the sun shone upon. They could escape the wrath of the Mikado as easily as they had that of their parents, if he had enough daring about him.

Woman, it is said of you that you came to comfort man; is it to deceive him also?

By the time that watchful lamp fainted in the night, Kojiro was soothed as by

magic. Happy dreams and glorious visions hugged him about.

Kioto is the historic capital of old Japan. For her flowers and fair women her name is famous, for her poets and artists also. A quaint lover of the old sepultured himself in one of the palace archives, not many years ago. When he came out he said that he had found a curious document. Many scholars became interested in that old manuscript. But, as it happens, this story is more interested in it than any one of them. "My Life" is the title of the volume. The name of the author is also traceable with a little help of the imagination. It reads "Kojiro." The record is full of exclamation points and very few periods. That is because complete sentences are not many. Here is a sample page:

"July 2, xiii. of Tempei.

"A violent knock awoke me. 'Osono!' I cried. I looked around. Osono was gone and the gold with her. A man

kicked open the door and came in; it was the *shoya*. Only one path was open to me. I leapt to the ground, seized a *kama*, and attempted hara-kiri. In the name of the state and of his majesty, the *shoya* ordered me to stop. My hands were palsied, blood streamed from my eyes, every particle of strength forsook me; in that bright morning all was night with me.

“The *shoya* exclaimed at the top of his voice, ‘Look, look, look!’ Waking from my stupefaction, I looked, and saw on the paper shade of the lamp, thinly traced with charcoal, the handwriting of my wife, ‘Good-by; I take this gold as the price of all the sufferings you have caused me since we ran away together.’ The inscription was superfluous; I understood all before I saw it. Sorrow, disgrace, soul-sickening mortification, death! Ah, how faint a shadow of the utterable real do these words caricature! I prayed that I might die; but there I was, after having suffered ten thousand deaths already. No place in which to live, no means to take my life.

“I had sinned; O heavens, but thy punishment! Do I justly deserve all this?”

The *shoya* took charge of Kojiro, imprisoned him in his godown, and placed three strong men at the door. The old man was not meddlesome by nature; but he appreciated the situation. Meanwhile Kojiro sat in the dusk (for the guards had persuaded the sun to be ashamed of this wretch of a gardener). He was a perfect interrogation point. He could not understand. Who was he? An insignificant plantsman who had spun his life thread by stealing the light of day. His wife had thrown him away and kept her old shoes. How came it that this man should be selected out of so many of his professional brothers to wear the crown of royal recognition and bleed under the thorn of irony?

“Oh, can’t you help me?” he cried, knocking at his own breast. But his heart stood still; then, affrighted, it bounded with violent throbs. His head ached in response to that appeal for help. Alas, and alas! the tears that boiled in his swol-

len eyes helped little to enthrone genius within a common hand. Oh, for that power that calls forth immortality out of mortality, a god out of man! What could be done? Through whose lips could he send in his resignation to this gracious call from the sovereign? That body of his, scarce five feet seven, was there no place in this wide world to put it? Was Osono the rust that ate up the steel of his manhood? She was hateful, yes, but far more contemptible than she was he himself. Dark, dark! But Remorse felt that it might be made still darker; so she flooded it with the ink which some of the angels had used to write a very black record. And the thought, "Had I been true to my vows, faithful to the hermit?" flashed lightning over his purgatory and left it darker than ever.

"Here it is, my life. Take it, gods! take it, Buddhas, and ye ghosts! I fling it away willingly. No, you do not accept it, this cursed black pollution! But, oh, pity me, I cannot die. I cannot pray; you have all forsaken me. Have I not suffered? Am I not punished?"

The groan was dismal; but the tears of blood which Remorse strained from him, and the crimson stream torn with his own teeth from his lips, painted in a more sinister colour the hell within his soul.

For a couple of hours he was a ghastly being, lying on the floor without the slightest sign of life. But life wandered back. It was always night in the godown, so it did not make any difference whether the day waxed or waned. But just at that time the sun was dying outside, and creation was falling asleep on the hill-tops. Kojiro sat still till the temple bells tolled out midnight; then it was that a voice woke many a confidential echo from the corners of the godown. Kojiro was thinking in a whisper:

“ Trying to murder myself because a woman deceived me?—and I call myself a man? Die? Why not die in the effort of realising the garden? Try—try—try! My best, that’s nothing, I know; the best a man can do is not much. But—but—but—if indeed I realise the garden of my

dreams, no one will think it a garden at all. It may be monstrous, outrageously common, in other eyes. No matter. Surely some chisel must have cut the valley of Katsura gawa, the rocks of Atago Mountain. True, they do not bear the names of men. But man! why cannot he walk in the footsteps of a god? Cannot the finite ever leap the barrier? At least I would find this out, yes, before I die!"

Something brought lightning to his eyes.

With the morning came the *shoya*. He unlocked the door and asked Kojiro to step into the *kago* standing ready outside. They started, and at the end of their journey the gates of Nara palace stood open-armed.

One thousand picked workmen, when they form a single machine controlled by a single brain, work out a wonder. Kojiro gathered many unnamable things. "Great heavens!" was all the *shoya* could say when he inspected them, and the Lord Chancellor's "*Kore wa shitari!*!" meant

the same thing. This done, the gardener walled up the site so that no eyes could peep in or look over; and as for the birds, they tell no secrets. The thousand men worked for about two months; then seven hundred and twenty-three of the number came out. No one knew why. And the only thing they said was that they could not take a certain oath. At the end of another month a hundred and fifty-one more men were ejected. Fifty-three men besides Kojiro remained within the wall at the close of the year.

The summer passed; the autumn grew ruddy with ripe fruits, and dropped them. And every morning the chorus of many voices rose and echoed back and forth among the stars flickering in the light of dawn. Winter froze the playful graces of the rills; her successor pitched her tent of purple mists in the melting shades of mountain woods and along the laughing meadow streams; summer taught her winged tribe the music not altogether of earth; the moon hung pensive in the autumnal skies; and all these blended in one

circle, exemplifying Time's relation to its mother, Eternity; and yet no thoughtful bee ever freighted its wings with the least bit of news from within the walls of the industrial hermitage. The sky, too, was very faithful, and no mirage ever loomed up to satisfy the curious of earth. Not even the Mikado was admitted. Three years passed thus. Meanwhile all the workmen came out, and Kojiro was left the sole sovereign of his own realm. Three and forty of his men had been carried out to be placed under the sod and the stone.

• • • • •

The Lord Chancellor was in the habit of riding round the palace in person. One afternoon his advance guard arrested a "singular thing" on the north side of the walled garden. The attendant of the chancellor cried, "Down!" as he led the thing into the presence of his master. But it stood erect. Its huge, heavy, tangled mass of hair mimicked very successfully a monsoon in a willow forest. The daring beard filled up

the holes and ditches in the face which pain, anxiety, and intense excitement had dug, and clothed the breast, otherwise naked. A ghost of a garment clung to the waist, like the picture of a faithful, tender wife, maltreated, torn, soiled, despised. The chancellor met the eyes of the savage for full ten minutes and, "How now, Kojiro?"

The man fell down upon his face.

• His majesty was rather patient, for a royal person, I mean. But when the Lord Chancellor reported the completion of the garden, his majesty made an impression upon his minister. In after days, the minister translated the impression into words, "Just like a fox with his tail on fire!"

They placed the marble dais off the south corridor of the palace. The dais was partly within the wall of the garden, crowning its terrace; technically speaking, it was at the station-point of the perspective. White and purple draped the opening in the wall. When the curtain parted,

Kojiro was seen prostrated upon the marble step. A prolonged, vacant stare! —his majesty, open-mouthed, sprang a step or two forward, his hands thrown behind him, his brow stormy. Wonder came and wiped away all traces of culture, dignity, self-possession. And the most wonderful and the most unaccountable of all was that the chancellor did not note any change in the royal person. Remember, too, that never before had a smile or a frown appeared or disappeared on the emperor's face, unnoted by the minister. And, what is more, the entire court ignored the extraordinary movements of its master—the court which never was known to miss a single quiver of the royal lips, a shade in the royal eyes. What was the matter? One ample cause for all these things—the garden!

The rocks! as common a thing as earth and water, why should they enslave the eyes of the Son of Heaven? His majesty (and the whole court, for that matter) looked long at them. Did they really see how Kojiro had embraced, caressed,

warmed, wooed, slept by and upon them night after night, I wonder? As for the rocks, they appeared natural, and unnatural also. To ape Nature to perfection was but a phase of Kojiro's ambition. The perfect expression of Nature plus Kojiro—nothing more, nothing less, was the ideal of the gardener. The result was that the rocks fought; they frowned formidable anathemas, tessellated patience, preached faithfulness, prophesied eternity. No flower, not even a tuft of *ran*, not one. Streams encircled the garden, but they seemed mad. They bit the rocks, and their teeth flew like snow. Their laughter, like the fingers of a fairy, went pecking over the lute strings of the human heart. They sobbed too, and the souls of the beholders hugged that sorrow as a mother presses her babe. And the dews that beaded the eyelashes of the emperor were his own heart made liquid. Dead trees were not despised there; yes, there were a number of them. Icho, ginnan, cedar, pine, oak, hugged each other in shocking promiscuousness. The gardener had failed

to civilise their savage passions with a lesson in modesty; a patch of an African jungle was the result. Yes, it was that, but it was also the condensed essence of suggestion. A magic touch of perspectography, and his majesty, the great Ten Shi, was the fool of an illusion. The garden hurled him into a cyclone of dreams. His soul tripped over the paths whereupon a mountain goat would never risk his hoofs, and wandered lost amid the steeps of the Kiso and the Ransan ranges.

At the royal feet was Kojiro, prostrated. Slight tremours passed over him; but none regarded him.

His majesty snatched the purple robe from the hands of his retainers. That was the first thing he did after waking from his trance.

“Rise, Kojiro!” exclaimed the royal voice.

No response.

“Rise; receive the favour of thy emperor!” The royal hands held out the robe of rank to the gardener, an unheard of honour.

But no response.

The chancellor lifted up the prostrate man. The warmth of life was fast passing from the frame of Kojiro into the marble step.

Aboard the “Akagi”

Aboard the “Akagi”

A Story of the Battle of the Yellow Sea

I

Ordinarily, a man with an average portion of common sense, blessed with a fair amount of healthy uncertainty in the matters beyond the grave, and the sunny sun above him, and a good digestion within him, is not likely to court death as he would his sweetheart.

But then—

There are occasions; there are differences in the natures of men.

The “Akagi” was a baby of a Japanese gunboat of 615 tonnage. The “lamest duck” in the Chinese ranks was more than twice her size. As for the two largest

ironclads under the yellow dragon flags, they were each 7,430 in tonnage.

Vice-Admiral Ito, the commander-in-chief of the Japanese squadrons, was very much of a mother in some things. And his heart toward the "lame ducks" in his fleet was womanly. And then, here is his motto:

"Annihilate the Chinese without the loss of one of your own!"

And his first care, in the plan of the battle, was to tuck away under the wings of the principal squadron, the "Akagi" and also the "Saikyo Maru"—a merchantman hastily created into an armed transport, with four quick-firers.

So to the port of the squadron they went.

On the port quarter of the "Akagi" there stood two cadets. They were losing their souls through their eyes.

"Zannen! What a tax on our love-country-heart!"

"Jitsuni! In truth, it's past endurance!"

They looked on.

“There—look, look there!—look yonder!”

Then a perfect weed-growth of gestures sprouted. Also there was a stormy billowing of their eyebrows, great craning of their necks, rounding of eyes and mouths as well—an impatient sigh or two!

A moment. And very suddenly: “Banzai! Nihon Navy banzai!”

Just then the flying squadron was flanking the Chinese right wing. What a revelation for the gods they were, the starboard broadsides of the vessels of the squadron—the “Yoshino,” the “Takachiho,” the “Akitsushima,” the “Naniwa”! It did, in all truth, look as if some one had pulled up Asama, Vesuvius, and a couple more by the roots, had set them afloat on their sides, so that their craters shot at the horizon instead of the midday sun, and made them fly at the rate of fourteen knots an hour.

“Look, look!” and the finger of a cadet was pointed at the hapless “Yang-Wei,” the outermost vessel of the Chinese right. And, to tell the truth for once in a narrative of excitement, such as war, there was

a big enough load of smoke aboard her to smother all the Klondike mosquitoes to death.

She was on fire and—doomed!

The cadets on board the “Akagi” were by no means divine—especially in the matter of patience. They were ruled out of the stage of action; and the sight before their eyes was calculated to disturb the coolness of a god. Unless you were there, you could hardly know how much of patriotism and self-control is required to behave correctly under such strain.

And yet, how unreasonable they were to complain!

Whoever thought of such a thing as to whip a mouse into a mêlée of elephants, if one cared anything for the well-being of the mouse?

II

A moment on a battlefield is a turn of a kaleidoscope. And, as a matter of fact, a few moments did bring a wonderful

change in the fortunes of the war on that autumn day, especially as far as the "Akagi" was concerned.

The faster vessels of the principal squadron steamed ahead. And in the spirited race they little remembered the slower-footed brethren among them. Naturally, they dragged behind.

The "Akagi" was the slowest as well as the smallest.

And now she was exposed to the full fury of the battle. It was as if Fortune said to her: "Show us now what you can do!" And the men aboard the "Akagi," silent and intent at the guns, could not help boiling all over with a wild paroxysm of delight in their heart of hearts.

The pious would have said that it was heaven's own hand that gave to her this opportunity thrown, so to speak, right into her lap. Did you ever know luck so happy? The unexpectedness of it made the exultation the keener.

III

“Berabo! The sons of Yamato, right ye are! Let the men of the land of Central Bloom see what make of men the surround flag waves over! Banzai! The ‘Hiyei’ banzai!”

The “Hiyei” had just ported her helm.

What does her commander mean? Does he not know that it will throw his old ship smash into the embrace of the huge ironclads at the Chinese centre? Well, he knew that better than any other man, perhaps, since that was the very thing he aimed to do. It will never do to say of him: “There was method in his madness;” because that action which scared very daring into cowardice, was the result of a systematic and cool judgment, and the keen insight into the situation and the promptness of action. That was the only way—daring as it was—of saving the ship. If he tried to follow in the wake of the principal squadron, he would be forced to re-

ceive the fire of the two ironclads, the "Ting-Yuen," the Chinese flagship, and the "Chen-Yuen," her sister vessel, and also all of the Chinese right wing. And, after all the risk, he was sure that he would not be able to keep up with the rest of the squadron because of the ship's slow speed. He would pierce the hostile line, take the short cut, and meet the principal squadron on the other side!

"This was splendidly done!" comments Philo McGiffin, an ex-American naval officer and the commander of the "Chen-Yuen."

The waters all about the "Hiyei" rose in a thousand fountains and clapped their hands and applauded her. And no wonder! History cannot give you too many cases where an old-style ship of 2,200 tonnage, with only three 17-centimetre and six 15-centimetre Krupp guns, engaging two ironclads of 7,430 tonnage each and armed each with four 30½-centimetre Krupp, two 15-centimetre, and twelve machine guns. And that, too, at the close range of 500 metres.

IV

They say "the sailor's heart is big enough to love them all!" Meaning by "all," the pretty women he meets.

There was a cadet to whom this did not apply.

The imperial declaration of war was issued on the 1st of August, 1894. Four months before that, when the war was a certainty in the minds of a certain military circle, although the exoteric commoners but vaguely suspected it—in a poesy-embalmed corner of the old Capital of Flowers—call it Kioto, if you like—in a garden which one should never dare describe in black and white, nor, indeed, in any colours, there were two young people. The moon was lighting them, and so also the distant, star-like glimmer of lanterns held up by the twilight-sleeved arms of pine and cherry trees.

One of the young people was in the uniform of a cadet and the other was a girl—

beautiful enough, indeed, she was, even in that all-obliterating night, to make the moon turn pale with jealousy.

What were they doing? You know that. What were they talking about? But how can I tell? They were not in the shouting mood evidently, and the Japanese sentiment abhors loudness of demonstration. And then, too, the most of their talking was done in perfect silence. I am not speaking in riddles; all lovers understand me.

As Masamitsu rose to depart, he took her hand. They could not see the expression of each other's eyes, for the moon entered into the dewdrops which their eyelashes were piercing and spent all her glory in turning them into gems and gave only shadows to their eyes. But if the lips, the eyes, the colour of their cheeks refused to speak the unutterable in the hearts of the lovers, why, something else must tell it.

And so their hands were together, their fingers were woven more tenderly than ever the tendrils of morning-glories.

A perfect silence! It might be because

he had too much to say—she also, for the matter of that. No, he could not say, “Good-by!”

He moved a little, and she broke the silence;

“*Arē moshi*; will you not be here to-morrow? At least a few days longer, I pray you?”

How the western lovers would have thrown themselves into each other’s arms! But the Japanese lovers are a cultured set.

Something scared sleep off Shizuka’s pillow that night.

One who saw a young man tottering along the night-silenced streets, strangely intoxicated with something more potent than liquor, advertising himself to the stars as a puppet of violent emotions, might have looked upon his cadet uniform and felt outraged. Whoever thought of such a thing?—a cadet of the Imperial Japanese navy carrying himself so bonelessly, in such a jelly-fish fashion!

V

When the night had left Shizuka alone with her thoughts and a troubled pillow, the darkness and her God heard her say: "What a sinner I am! What a miserable, cowardly, accursed traitor! But, oh, how can I—how can I do it? Weak and wicked? yes, I know that. Oh, help me, help me, oh ye gods!"

A few drops gathered on her eyelashes; they rolled silently down her cheeks, and her pillow received them sadly enough.

What could be the matter with her?

Her mother, a few days ago, half jokingly, half seriously, had said to her: "If Masamitsu were to fall in the battle?"

Triumph was in her eyes when she replied: "How joyously would I thank the gods!"

She did not want to keep him back—that was not it. Oh no! She was the daughter of a *samurai*.

The State before everything; loyalty, the

virtue of virtues; for Nihon's honour, for the lustre of the Hino-Maru flag, all was to be laid on the altar—one's possession, happiness, family, his children, his love, his all! Such was the supreme code of the Nihon Samurai.

Masamitsu was to go on the very next day. And she said to him, "At least a few days longer!" And well did she know that he would be by her side on the sinking of the sun that day. She had tried to show him how heroically she could bear everything for her country—for him! And she had seen that every effort of hers made him softer, tenderer, more reluctant. Would her image make a coward of him when the cannons hailed each other and the decks were painted red? Did she have no more confidence in her lover? She censured herself, and yet—

There he was before her, becoming under her very eyes more and more a lover and less and less a patriot. What could she do? Why not send him away at once? But how could she be sure that he would not leave his soul behind him—with her;

and disgrace himself, his family, his country? Deaths! tens and thousands of them rather than to see her lover blacken his honour or soil the flag—the flag dearer far to her than her life, aye, than her father's, mother's, her lover's life!

There was a plan in her mind as she wept silently that night with the stars which were watering her flowers outside with their tears—the flowers which he had caressed. That plan, if she were brave enough to carry it out, would settle the whole thing right. She could not doubt that.

“Yes, I will do it—I will! May the gods and Buddha help me! How cowardly I am, and what a base, weak woman!” she murmured and wept.

The few days glided past like a dream. And at last Masamitsu was there for the final leave-taking.

His train was to leave very early the next morning.

Shizuka rose and went to the *tokonoma*—a small alcove in a corner of the room, furnished with a low platform whereupon

sacred things were kept, and which indicated the seat of honour. There were a flower pot and a sword rack upon the platform. In the pot was a pet fuji (wistaria chinensis)—one of those miracles of human care lavished upon a plant. The entire city of Kioto knew of it, and the connoisseurs valued it at many hundred yen. On the rack was a sword, a couple of feet in length, perhaps not that long. And once upon a happier day of Nihon Samurai, a prince-swordsmith condensed his long, toilsome life of thirty years into that short compass. It was one of those masterpieces which have in it more of soul than steel, a treasure handed down in the family through generations, and which is utterly beyond any valuation in money.

Shizuka rose, beckoned her lover with her eyes, and they approached the *toko-noma*.

She took the sword off the rack.

“This is my humble parting gift to you, if you would condescend to make me happy by accepting it,” she said.

She drew it. They stood side by side and looked at it, into the depth of its sheen. It looked like a frozen piece of a deep, deep heaven—clear as the sea of Chinu, stainless as Fuji-yama. Phantoms as ethereal as the dreams of a god glided into it; dragons, in its shimmering light, as vivid as imagination, chased each other up and down from the guard to the point.

Shizuka pointed at the wistaria in the pot. She said:

“Do you know how I love that flower?”

“I was told,” replied Masamitsu, “that it is your very life.”

“Truly so it is and” (cutting its stem in two with the sword) “here it is—take it. It is for you!”

He was silent. His hand, stretched out to receive it, was trembling; his head bowed.

“Take the sword as well.”

He took the bare sword.

“Wait, let me caress it before it goes with my knight to fight the battle for the land of the gods.”

She threw her long sleeve around the blade. Only an inch or two at the point was visible. She held it with both of her hands over the thick covering of her sleeves.

“What a brave thing you are,” she said, addressing the sword, “almost as brave as my Masamitsu!”

A pause.

She looked at it, and then at him. They were strangely intent, those beautiful eyes of her’s! And he, who saw his own image reflected in their depths, was thrilled to the very marrow.

“A—ah!” It was hardly a scream; it was so faint. That was all she said as she sunk down to the floor.

As for Masamitsu, he could not cry, shout, speak—he could not breathe.

Quick as a shock, he jerked the sword from her. But it was too late. A mouth was opened in her throat. It was redder even than her lips. And from it life was stepping out in a red stream.

He took her into his arms and struggled for a word. It would not come.

She said: "For Nihon—yours and mine—fight, fight! With you always—I will stand close by you—by your side—our flag, uphold it!"

When her breath failed her, she smiled at him.

VI

All the glory of the red-letter day, September 17, 1894, was not to be the "Hiyei's" alone. At least such was the determination of the "Akagi."

It was chaos aboard the "Hiyei" when she came out triumphantly through the Chinese line.

At 1.55 P. M. the "Hiyei" signalled her distress. What a heaven-sent opportunity for the "Akagi"! That is to say, it was the finest chance for the "Akagi" to die—gloriously no doubt. And the "Akagi" steadied her bow to plough through the boiling, thundering, bursting mêlée.

The "Lai-Yuen," the "Chi-Yuen," and the "Kwan-Chia" on both sides of the

Chinese ironclads saw that the daring little adventurer meant to follow in the wake of the "Hiiei." And the combined tonnage of 6,450 bore down against "Akagi's" 615, and the fire from the five 8½-inch guns, seven 6-inch guns, four 5-inch, and thirty machine guns roared against the "Akagi's" one 9½ and four 5-inch and six machine guns.

All was hazy. Smoke and spray which shots falling short pounded up into the air completely blindfolded the "Akagi." The Chinese were amused. The dare-devil will surely lose her way and be abducted by the sharks to the cool crystal palace of Ryu-wo. Meanwhile, the fire-eyed broods of perdition came to tempt her, smashing into her hull and bursting on her decks and singing and hissing in her upper works.

And crash!

A shell smote her bridge.

Cadet Masamitsu was on the ladder mounting up. And into his arms fell an officer's body. The cadet recognised him by the uniform.

“Commander, Commander Sakamoto!” he called. At the same time he pulled the upper part of the body to see the commander’s face—to see whether he was fatally hurt.

As he did so, he called again:

“Commander, are you seriously wounded? Commander!”

A gush of blood which spattered his face and breast was the only reply.

A shell had carried the commander’s head and blown it into smoke and a heroic memory.

The cadet went upon the smoking bridge with what was left of Lieutenant-Commander Sakamoto in his arms.

The vessel shivered just then—bang! crash! The mainmast was humbled to the deck, and the three men on the military top were seen in midair striking a ghostly pose against the smoke. The national ensign, torn already with many a shot, flew down into the sea. In truth, that was the fall of a sun!

“Uphold the flag!” shouted the cadet. He did not remember then, though, that

in a flower-scented corner of Kioto, scarce four months ago, when Shizuka was in his arms and—in those of death—that her last request had closed with the self-same sentence which he had shouted into the ears of the desperate “Akagi.”

He rushed down from the bridge; cut his way across the paths of shots.

There were two men there already with a jury mast. He climbed after them, and with his own hand he pulled the halyard. The Hino-Maru flag again waved over the “Akagi.”

“Banzai! Nippon Banzai! His Majesty ten thousand years. Nihon navy ban—”

It was so abrupt, that break in Masa-mitsu’s hurrah.

He was seen to falter, throw himself on the jury mast, embrace it with both of his arms.

“What’s the matter?”

And the men wondered.

They saw, almost through the centre of his back, there was a crimson hole. Blood was starting to spurt out of it. He wore

a white coat that day. The red round hole
in his back on the white background of his
coat!

And so he dyed with his own blood
another national flag!

A Japanese Sword



A Japanese Sword

While the modern Kameoka was still called Kameyama, Castle-town—about seventeen years before the revolution (“the great earthquake,” as we call it) of 1868—a duel was fought to the east of the castle gate. The clan had two masters of the sword, and it had always been a topic of discussion among the *samurai* as to which of the two was the greater. The victor in the duel, purely out of respect for the memory of the one he had slain, and not at all from shame or fear, left the clan. The vanquished was brought home.

A young woman, delicate and of noble birth, received her husband’s remains. Some clanswomen saw her at the gate of her now lonely home, and never could forget the pale, beautiful girl-wife. To-day, if you go among them, those women will

tell you all about it as vividly as they have ever done. And, what is more, they will tell you the same story over and over again. Don't be afraid—the tale, I assure you, will not bore you.

The young wife was proud, they say, and when she thanked the friends who brought back her husband (two years had scarcely passed since they had been married, remember) mangled, pallid, bloody, there was no tremour in her voice, and her lips were as firm as when they had pressed the bridal cup of *sake*. They know what it costs to shut up all the anguish within a woman's heart and put on a calm face, that she may not tear other hearts along with hers. They are proud of this, their sister, and I promise you that they would have done likewise under the same circumstances.

All this happened to Nobuwo's mother, five months before he was born.

Ujigami, the guardian deity of Kameyama, had his shrine on a hillock cloaked thick with oak, about two hours' walk

from the town. They were there, sitting on a rock by a stone *torii*, one fine morning of one of the last days of March—Nobuwo and his mother. There she told him everything—his father's death and all. As she watched him (and not the slightest expression of his emotion escaped her) there came something like a smile on her lips, as if her gratitude to the gods made her happy,—ah! she had an excellent reason to thank the gods,—she spied the soul of the child through his parted lips and starting eyes, and saw that it was that of her husband.

She led him by the hand to the front of the shrine. There was a large metal mirror behind the open work, sending back the light which the sun gave to it. His mother told him how the mirror reflected the naked soul of every votary who prayed and swore there.

The young Nobuwo swore after his mother—falteringly; for he could scarcely pronounce some of the big words used in the oath. Ah, it was a touching sight, this young soul calling upon the gods to

witness, as he swore, that he would never allow the same heaven to cover himself and his father's foe! His mother, by his side, was in tears in spite of herself. But it is also true that her beautiful face was full of light. One could hardly find a prouder woman than she.

At her deathbed (when Nobuwo was fourteen) she made him renew his oath.

“With reverence receive,” she said, and gave him a sword in a case of heavy silk. The *samurai* call their swords their “souls.” The sword was her husband's soul. She had never, awake or asleep, parted with it.

Young Nobuwo hugged it with frenzy, speechless; but his tears slowly rolled from his cheeks down to his mother's face. He was bending over her. The light faded slowly out of her eyes; but the smile around her lips, was it not a reflection of the torch lighting her soul into the unknown?

After all, after all, noble mother, death dares not lay his brutal hands on you—

on you his touch is not ugly. So the boy felt.

His progress in fencing and sword exercises was pronounced miraculous.

“Your skill is superior to mine,” said his local instructor kindly, “go to Yedo, and seek a worthier master.”

Nobuwo was in his master’s private chamber, about a week after he had entered the club of Hida at Yedo. His master gave him a cup of *saké* (for which honour his fellows, when they heard of it, gave him a mental cuff) and asked him to speak freely of his history. And Nobuwo found it pleasant to talk about himself.

After that his master was specially partial to him. Of course his fellows were the first who noticed it; but he, too, was obliged to admit it. But his peers had an excuse for this.

“*Shikataga nei ya*—such a skilful disciple to favour, truly is it not reasonable for the master?” they all said.

They also said, “We cannot say how high he will climb!”—behind his back.

But when Nobuwo was within ear-shot, they bemoaned the decline of learning and art and the prevalence of the brutal exercise, meaning fencing.

Hero worship is a strong trait of every Japanese young man. But with Nobuwo it was *the* trait: more correctly speaking, there was nothing else within him. About a year after he came to know his master, his greatest joy would have been to have died for him. But had he forgot his mother and the oath he swore after her? Not at all. Every night he had a regular love scene with the sword of his father. But how could he die for his master and accomplish his life aim at the same time? Nobuwo had never thought of it just in that light.

There is a well-beaten road, as you can see in your history, that leads from Babylon to Constantinople; from Korakorum to Pekin; from Nara to Yedo. And the Shogun's régime marched out of Yedo along the same highway. When the revolution of 1868 was painting the streets of

Yedo with human blood, just as if some one printed its facsimile map in red ink, Nobuwo was seventeen. He was with his master, Hida. He was impatient—was he not old enough to avenge his father now? He went to his master and made a clean breast of the affair and asked his advice.

“Better wait till you are twenty years old,” he said, with his usual grave tone; “then I will be your assistant sword.”

That settled the question. None in the empire, wide as it was, stood higher than his master. With his help he was sure of success. There were many numskulls who believed that his master was, after all, a mere mortal. As for Nobuwo, he took no stock in any such nonsense.

Tamagawa, the river of jewels, is not false to its name. Many an unfortunate girl made a mirror of it and sighed out a wish that its purity were hers. There, at the river, the soiled souls of the great capital used to gather. Whether they have ever succeeded in washing their stains is not on record.

Hida sat, jelly-fish fashion, on the moss-covered pebbles under the shade of a large oak tree on its bank. The river whispered to him confidentially and sparkled at his feet. Nobuwo was not with him, which was rather extraordinary. What was the matter? The fencing master was there, from all appearance, sunning the inside of his soul, and, naturally, he cared to have no one save the ever-present blue overhead to witness him.

"Shall I tell him all? I will tell him all. The gods know that I love the boy." Such was his thought. But something kept him from going any further in his resolution. And yet he seemed to know that he must. Have you ever loved? Then you will understand him.

"Death is nothing to me," he went on in his thought. But there was a confession in his heart at the same time, to wit, it was sweet to that strong swordsman to love and be loved by the young boy. He forgot his wife and his children, and the boy stood in his mind clearer and clearer, ever growing.

“ Could I but commit *kappuku* and give my head to him! But he is my equal, perhaps a superior. To fall under the sword of a peer is no disgrace. But the world knows him as my disciple. What mud would it fling at my ancestral name?”

Ah! that was a heavy blow and it felled him. To retain the name you have received from your father and hand it down to your children in its snow purity and with an increase of halo, is a great thing with a Japanese *samurai*. Hida recovered from the blow, which is saying a great deal more than you can safely say about the courage of a Bonaparte or of him who taketh a walled city.

“ Disgrace or no disgrace, the boy shall know the truth. I will fall at his hand.” He ended his reflection with the half-uttered prayer, “ Oh, eight million gods, grant that his sword may be too powerful for the defence mine may afford!”

Hida celebrated the twentieth birthday of Nobuwo at his house. Many noted swordsmen of the city were there. At the

banquet Hida read a public declaration to the effect that Nobuwo should be his successor in case he, from any cause, became unable to fill his duties as a master. The sword dance, the *tin-rin ten-chan* of the *samisen*, the singing of Chinese poems, the fan dance of the geisha, helped to pass the *saké* cups around the merry circle.

“Steady, my boy!” Hida was saying to Nobuwo, by the solitary off house, far from the noise of the carousal, under the midnight stars. “Steady—yes, it is true. Believe me. For what reason would I deceive you?”

“I believe not even a word. Oh, master, how can such things be possible?”

Truth, the whole naked truth, was told him.

Within, the merry-making, the drinking, and dancing went on far into the night, and the men with their brains soaked in *saké* met the dawn coming down the Orient hills in her white silk gown.

But Nobuwo met her a sober man—in

fact, that was the first sober moment since he was born.

Have you ever heard a hair-stiffening ghost story? and then have you gone into a dark, dark room? Do you remember how you felt? Did you want to rush out madly? And then at the same time did you not try to sit down where you stood and compose yourself? Man's soul experiences something like that when a huge octopus, otherwise known as a combination of circumstances, comes along and makes a spittoon out of it.

Nobuwo's soul was in the dark. The new light that fell upon his life was too strong for him, blinding, sealing his eyes. He did not know what to do; but he wanted to know how to act, so badly.

His father's enemy was there within his grasp, you might say. His oath appeared before him, and he recognised that that was the only kind of bread his spirit had fed upon all its life.

His hero, his archangel! he was also there within his embrace. And the gods

to whom he had bowed night and morning recalled to him his prayers and woke them in echoes in his heart: "Grant, oh, ye gods, that one day I may tell him (meaning his master) how grateful I am, by giving my life for him."

Many others before him had torn their hair, but never as he did; many others had had their hearts broken (for this has been a wretched world for a long time), but never so brutally, so helplessly.

"Dark, dark! no light?" he cried over and over again.

You can hardly believe that a young man of twenty could strike a chord that is truly touching; but there was that in Nobuwo's cry which would have made any misérable wretch happy—by comparison, I mean. That was his first experience, and it went hard with him. He acted like a silly, crazy baby, in good faith, and my hero awaits the first stone from one of you who have had a similar experience.

He did not know what to do. Light was what he wanted.

He was in that old dingy room, alone with the sword—three days after the great revelation. He was gazing at it, as he had done every night when all else went into the big star-domed temple to worship in devout silence. As he looked at the sword as if it were a thing of great depth, he remembered how his mother appeared in his dreams, two nights in succession. She came to him with the same smile with which she died; stood at his pillow and pointed to the sword which Nobuwo was hugging in his sleep. She did not speak.

He was looking at the sword, because, as I have said, he wanted light, and because he did not know where else he could go for it. He was sure that if he could but read the handwriting that came and went there, he could get what he wanted. The dull lamp-light fell upon the stainless sword in stars, and at every turn Nobuwo gave to it, blood-tides rushed down its sheen. Mysteries deepened, increased. Light never came.

But he must have light. The sword was his only prophet. Nothing discouraged

him therefore, and he repeated the same thing over and over every night.

When Nobuwo left his master at the birthday celebration, by the off house, he had said: "Master, give me one month's leisure. Then I shall let you know."

The month had dwindled into a day. He was as much at sea as ever. That night he went to his oracle, the sword, as usual. The message must come or else he must die.

Die!—there was a strong flash of light on the blade. The flash entered Nobuwo's eyes. He breathed as if he had just come out of deep water. He sheathed the sword.

The following morning he sent his master a note:

Condescend to wait at midnight at the shrine of Yoshida.

The note found his master ready. Yoshida's shrine was half way between Yedo and Tamagawa, and was a favourite spot for the revolutionary patriots. It stood on the very spot where that famous patriot-

statesman was beheaded by the Shogun's administration. The spear-shaped cedars raised a queer kind of battlement about the sacred shrine. Every storm that comes along—so it is said and believed—carries from it a loud complaint against heaven that allowed so great an outrage to come to pass. It was weird enough about the shrine even when the sun was mirthful on the leaves, but at night it was, as well known to the boys of the neighbourhood, one of the places where a gypsy would not go for a dime.

Hida lighted his lantern, because he could not proceed any farther without its help. He was a few hundred yards from the shrine in the bosom of the dense woods. He had dressed in white, as all *samurai* do when death is their bride. When he arrived there it was a trifle before midnight.

“So I am the first on the field,” he thought.

He sat at the foot of a stone light-stand and waited. An hour passed; no one came. Two hours passed—still he was

alone. Then he took up his lantern and went round the shrine, thinking. He went round twice; for man becomes somewhat absent-minded sometimes. One of the branches of a cedar tree was bent over at the east corner of the shrine. The uncertain light of his lantern fell upon an object which looked somewhat like a small pile of snow.

And the reason that made Hida stand stone-still, tells the whole story.

A letter was found on the ground, but as Nobuwo bowed over it, right after committing *hara-kiri*, it was stained badly.

Hida could but read little of it, but it was not altogether because blood obliterated the writing. I doubt very seriously whether any one of you can finish the letter. Sugita, one of the closest friends of Hida, a famous swordsman, tried to read it, and said that it made a woman out of him, which was a startling confession from that man.

Among other things which I need not

repeat here, for surely there is no merit in making my readers tearful, there were many allusions to the ethical code of Confucius. The letter also cited many historic examples wherein the Buddhas appeared on the scenes of *kataki uchi* (enemy-slaying) and assisted in the pious deeds of filial sons in severing the heads of their enemies.

The letter admitted that the writer was a perjurer; and, above all, a coward. (Now cowardice is the blackest in the category of crimes known to a Japanese *samurai*.) A coward, Nobuwo confessed; but he added that he was willing to pay that price for the privilege of loving Hida and that the price was sweet.

The boy was a total stranger to Him who said, "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you."

Had he but known Him!

A modest tomb marks a corner of the vast Aoyama cemetery and the mosses are already gathering around the name of

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Ota Nobuwo, cut in the stone. And this marks the spot where one of the noblest families of Kameyama returned to dust.

Hirata Kojiro



Hirata Kojiro

A Story of Tokio Society

I

Hirata Kojiro is a "society man," and—although it sounds contradictory—an interesting talker, a disillusioned philosopher, and altogether a very peculiar fellow, inasmuch as he is one of the very few whom knowledge has thoroughly humiliated. Hirata Kojiro at the Imperial University of Tokio led his class in the department of literature. Hirata Kojiro knows the lady who uses an ancient monogram on a corner of her perfumed note, and who is a great dame—great enough to wink at a Cabinet Minister or the young wearer of one of the oldest and most honoured crests in the realm and turn them

into dummy dolls. He knows also a certain beauty whose name is dyed and worked out in gold in front of a certain house in a corner of Yoshiwara. And Yoshiwara is that flower path of Tokio which is responsible for a great deal of the romance, laughter, suicides, follies, and purgatory of Japan, both in the days when the Tokio of the Ten-no was the Yedo of the Shoguns and in these later times, too, when we have learned the use of pistols.

The fact that brought him many trials and that made him open his eyes to his true life-mission—the fact, therefore, that was at once his curse and salvation—was that he was very handsome. He was born on the top step of that ladder built by a humorous god and called “social standing;” and he had much money and more wit. It was not his fault that all these things were thrust upon him.

For at least twenty years, ever since he could remember—for he was twenty-six when he made his Pompeian entry into Tokio society—he had looked upon himself in the glass several times a day. But

he had to confess that he had never seen himself truly till not less than two hundred pairs of eyes—Poppean, l'Enclosian, and otherwise—presented him with a convex, complex mirror.

His face, though handsome, was at the same time in open revolt in every line of its features with the conventional idea. Although you could not see the beautiful images that were hanging in the interior of his high, dome-like forehead, you could guess without much trouble that it was filled with the unrealised masterpieces of great artists. His nose was straight and slender, and in the quiverings of his nostrils you could see many captured fairies beating their pink wings. His mouth seemed to be too sensitive to have a set form: when closed, at its corners where the lips tie themselves in modest union, you could observe a touch of twilight. It was red, warm to the eye, full of ripples and storms, just like a sea—in short, a mystery. He seemed to have enough hair for two heads of passionate women, and it was so black that an Egyptian night was white

beside it. But, after all, women and people in general who had seen him did not remember these features. What they could not forget were his eyes. They were much too large to suit the taste of the artists of the Ukiyoye school. When they opened with the lifting of his brows they were childlike, innocent; when they closed half way they were an ecstatic dream, and when they looked at nothing particularly and were lost, as it were, in the crowded drawing-room of the gods, they were Vedic hymns.

Those who saw him at social functions felt as if they were out in evening dress to watch a comet. They all exclaimed: "A brilliant series of triumphs," and a strange chorus of envy, disappointment, indifference, savage revolt, melancholy, and what not added, "Oh, of course!"

But Hirata did not see the thing in the same light. And as he threw his silk *ki-mono* or swallowtail coat, as the case might be, into the gloomy arms of the break o' day, or as he lay in his bed begging Sleep to be good-natured to his tired

heart and brain, his fancies were as bitter as those of the Emperor on historic St. Helena. He was a failure. And really you could not blame him, seeing that where he dug for diamonds he found only dirt and vacuum. So, very logically to himself, very amazingly to others, and "abominably absurdly" to a certain number of titled mothers whose daughters were "charming" in the columns of society papers and on the lips of social gatherings, after seven years of toil and humiliation he disappeared from the eyes of men as completely as a shooting star. Of course he was crazy—nothing short of that—as the gossips very justly said.

Fuji-yama, they say, rose from the Musashi Plain in a single night. And at the New Year celebration three years later Hirata as suddenly came out of his hermitage.

His friends did not know what it all meant, but certainly they were very happy to see him.

"You act like a prophet, you conceited

rogue, you! No Gotama, no Confucius though, I warrant, but a Mahomet!" was the greeting from one of his club chums.

To a few of his most intimate fellows he said: "I am as bad as a new woman; I have a mission, this time—a very serious one. The fact is, it has possessed me and has forced me into the arena—I am a missionary!"

At which many whistles were heard; outbursts of cheers and laughter followed, and then the reinstalment of Hirata on the throne of King Wit and the invocation of the gods to witness.

II

The consensus of the comments on the marriage of Count Yoshimori was that, for the first time, one of the cleverest men of the august reign of Meiji made a consummate masterpiece of an ass of himself. So much so, indeed, that some of the gentlemen of leisure among his personal friends took pains to take up a subscription to

build him a decent monument—respectable by the side of the Sphinx on the Nile—atop the Kudan Hill, in the full view of the capital, just as soon as he would confess his weakness. The reason of it all was this: the count, a man of the world, went back to his ancestral homestead and married a girl there who knew vastly more of the Blessed Land of the Lotus than of the most ordinary fact of modern society.

The metropolitan ladies were very condescending to the bride, “poor child!” But that maid, with the scent of cedar and clover in her breath, fresh from the modest shades of primitive simplicity, had something, somewhere about her—it might have been in her dreamy gaze or in the languid inclination of her head, like a lily heavy with dews, they could not tell—which irritated great ladies who wished to be as omniscient as well as omnipotent as the gods, and were succeeding fairly well.

In a short time Tokio society did the countess the honour of adding another adjective to her pet appellation, and “poor child!” became “poor, strange child!”

With all the sincerity of this country-bred maid, which amused the capital not a little, there was an air of acting. As for her personal appearance, that was the one thing which afforded an excuse for her husband's weakness in his marriage. You might say of her that she was as homely as a daisy. But she was such a daisy that had you been a peony in a king's garden you could not help envying her. Some fairy in a dreamy mood must have woven the satin of her skin, which had the lustre of wet silk. The eyes of men, contemplating her, seemed to fall ever toward her feet, because her grace seemed as if she was just half way out of the ethereal world of fancies into this real humdrum. Her hands and arms, escaping from the curtain-like Japanese sleeves, were a pair of pink roses blooming on the perianth of white lilies. The oval of her cheeks was adorned with those finger-marks of happiness called dimples, her lips were a temptation, and her eyes seemed always looking for a lover to leap from the golden heart of a plum blossom. All of these charms

entered into an *ensemble* delightfully childlike and marvellously resembling a cherub of painters' dreams.

"Mark what I tell you, the count will have trouble on his hands in a month," was heard in a corner of the Tokio Club.

"As if you were the first fellow who plays the prophet on that point!" was also heard.

III

Countess Yoshimori was a daughter of the rigorous ethics of elder Japan. "A faithful wife never sees two men," her mother had said to her, and she remembered it. But what would you? Tokio society was not going to go back into the picturesque past of half a century ago just on account of the countess. She had to see, and she did see, many another man besides her husband—among them Hirata Kojiro.

Marquis Iyeya gave a ball at Rokumei Kwan. In a corner of that hall of fashion,

where pines, palms, and not a few flowers seemed to invite Secrecy to swing its nest, Hirata and the countess held converse.

Hirata—They tell me, madam (pointing to his heart), there is a vacuum here.

Countess Yoshimori—Then will your heart belong to a fortunate discoverer by right of discovery? If she succeed?

Hirata—But a female Nansen is a rare possibility.

Countess Yoshimori—Then it is at best a North Pole.

She laughed as a bird might laugh.

What she had thought impossible became not only possible, probable, but actual; what she had laughed at became merry at her expense. She had all the symptoms of a violent fever; she stared sometimes at a blank wall. She did not know that before her, ladies without number had gone through the same Red Sea, taking a leap, as they thought, into the promised land and finding themselves in a desert; but that was a fact. If you are

reasonable you certainly cannot blame the ladies—consider Hirata! It is like putting the sun in the sky and blaming the simple-hearted idolaters because they worship it. Hirata, moreover, had never looked so handsome, had never taken so much pains with his toilette.

“Has sharp-witted Count Yoshimori become blind all of a sudden?” the capital asked, behind his back, in a whisper.

IV

The distance between the dizzy height where woman makes a god of a mortal man and becomes overwhelmed with his charms, and that abyss into which she leaps, and which is called the conquest of love, is but a step—with some women. With the countess it was more than twice the span of the Pacific Ocean. In the bower of her youth, where society deserted her, books, which to a certain type of intellect prove a better teacher than experiences, and certainly of much wider scope

in their fields of tuition, took up her education.

When, therefore, she saw Hirata, all the possible situations which fiction and history could invent and record of a woman who finds that her heart is in the keeping of another than her husband, seemed to pass in panoramas before her. She raised her white, slender hand to give battle to the whole world, its petrified institutions, its modes of thoughts older than history, its graveyards and its gods.

She began, as so many do, by shunning Hirata, which was at once the confession of her partiality for him and her mistrust in her own defense. Compared to Hirata, Napoleon had no confidence in his powers to charm victory. And that overwhelming ease with which he trod the path to conquest—sure of it as a god—gave him a grace beyond all dreams.

On her part pride was summoned: "At best he would despise me," she sighed to herself, stopping in the midst of her absent-minded toilette. Then she weakened to the extent that she had to call the

ethical elements—fidelity to her husband and the virtue of woman—to her assistance. Finding her love rejoicing at every obstacle she could raise in its course, she blamed her fate.

Half a year of her acquaintance with Hirata passed, and already there were moments in her life when, in her philosophy, she turned fatalist. As for all the misfortunes that might accompany her adventure—that desert stretch of her life of “shame,” as the world calls it—these all beckoned her with a gesture as captivating as the delirium of ecstatic love. She was very cautious, with all that. The tests she applied to Hirata were miracles of ingenuity; and step by step, degree by degree, she made them stricter and harder to bear. And at last, seeing him pass through them like a piece of steel in the hand of a swordsmith, becoming purer and truer, she looked up to heaven and informed the immortals:

“He is my god!”

By “he” she meant Hirata.

* * * * *

"Here is a tribute to your charms, madam," her husband said to her, and gave her a note to read. It was addressed to her husband—an anonymous note, warning him against his wife. When she looked up to him from the paper he said:

"How ridiculous! How perfectly absurd! . . . Ha! ha! ha!" There was such a ring of sincerity in his merry laughter.

In fact, no longer able to resist, the countess outraged gossip. Of course, she looked upon her love as purely intellectual, spiritual—she would have died before staining it with a grosser element. But to be a constant companion of a god such as Hirata! She had surrendered her heart completely. Her husband, one of the shrewdest wits of the capital, was magnanimity made blind. Instead of being humiliated by this manly trust of her husband she accused him of indifference and vowed to punish it. What a justification for her conduct!

V

It was nearly two o'clock in the morning. The moon stood pale and silent many steps below the zenith on her decline, and she threw the dark outline of a weeping willow almost half way across the quicksilver of the lakelet in the back garden of Count Yoshimori's Azabu château.

“At the same hour three nights hence!” a woman's voice murmured.

“Yes, madam, all will be ready; I will wait for you at the gate. The steamer, as you know, madam, will sail at 5.35 in the morning. Three hours from here to Yokohama,” a man's voice answered.

“And America will be the ‘Balcony of the Lotus’ for me—for us!”

“Till then.”

“*O yasumi!*”

Two shadows emerged from under the willow. One of them flitted from shadow to shadow, along the sheen of the moon-struck ripples of the lakelet, till it reached the vine-covered wall of the château. It ascended the rope ladder gently, lightly.

The other stood perfectly still till a white arm waved in the silver of the moon from out of the window. Then it sought the stone wall, cleared it, and was no more.

The moon was silent; the night was full of tears.

The sleepy moon was again the sole witness.

There was a noise among the vines on the wall of the château of Count Yoshimori. The noise sounded like the confusion of many kidnapped sighs. The rope ladder was rubbing the leaves in its fall. Very soon a grey, bird-like shadow perched upon it. Step by step it descended, wakening the midnight dreams of the vine into many a suppressed exclamation.

There were soft steps approaching the foot of the ladder, but these the countess did not hear. There was a dark outline of a man at the point toward which she was descending, but him, she did not see.

Within a few steps from the ground, turning her head to survey the distance from the earth, she saw the masked man.

Then she let go her hands on the ropes and fell into his arms.

“Sweet lover, how thoughtful of you! I expected to find you at the gate!” she said, embracing him.

“My darling, my wife!”

A savage shock as powerful as an electric current shot through her. She gave a violent start and tried to push herself away with a fearful force. But Count Yoshimori held her firmly.

“Be calm, my dear,” he said, gently. “He is here too—see?”

Another shadow glided out of an azalea bush and came toward her. Yes, it was he: and the countess expected him to despatch her husband into a dreamless sleep with a blow. Her husband said:

“Let me have the pleasure of presenting to your ladyship a missionary, engaged in the work of saving hearts—husbands’ sweethearts.”

An hysterical laugh—she fainted—the death of romance!

There is no truer wife in the world to-day than Countess Yoshimori.



Kataki-Uchi



Kataki-Uchi

I

Like many another serious thing—a modest breeze can blow down an oak while in the seed—the whole thing had its birth in the light laughter of ill-timed levity.

The banquet—it was given in honour of the Autumn Moon—was held on the palace veranda of our lord of the Kameyama Castle. The maple leaves were turning, and the Ninth Moon of the year was dying. With all that, summer did not seem to like the idea of being forgot, and the memory of her riotous glory hung somewhere—you could not tell just where to save your life—perhaps alone in the minds of the poets at the banquets as the gracious perfume lingers when the lady is passed and gone.

Mazima Kumando was at the banquet.

The Buddhist speaks of the full moon as representing Truth—not an ugly idea. And, on that night, she did look like the face of a Buddha—pensive, nirvanic, beautiful. They chanted her praise in classic couplets; and, of course, they also drank to her health. For was it not for that they had gathered there? The result was, that in spite of the serene charms of the autumnal moon, spring tided through the veins of the *samurai* feasters. The *saké* also loosened the string which ties the tongue and which is called discretion. Battlefield experiences—for veterans were many among them—adventures with bears, and also of love. Men are such hopelessly and incurably vain fools. They talked—I mean they blew their own horns, and blessed are they who blow their own horns, for at least they will be blown!—of fencing, of the art of *jyujitsu*.

“Nothing can hold a candle to the Itto school when it comes to the real test of swordsmanship.”

“There is a secret stroke in the Shibukawa school of which none others dream!”

“In spite of all the secrets under the heavens, there is nothing that can hope to cope with the Shinkagé school.”

“That really sounds to me a large statement. Ah, if words be facts!”

“The august one speaks as if he would not object to seeing my statement tested. Very good. Nothing is easier.”

“May the humble one beg the honour of being your pair-sword?”

And as *saké* mounted to their heads they rose with their hands on the hilts of their swords.

“Gentlemen, gentlemen! Ah, gentlemen! Allow the humble one to remind the honourable presences that this is the palace of our lord, the prince.”

(The *samurai* could draw the sword in the palace of their lord. But they apologised for their misbehaviour by committing *hara-kiri* on the morrow.)

Thereupon the humorous passed the resolution:

“All the discussions, military, are too angular for a gathering such as this! The god of mirth! this is a gentle *fête*!”

Love adventures, then? Where, pray, were they out of place?

It was not given to the common to understand everything. This among other things: why a certain set of people could find such a storm of merriment in a "once-upon-a-time-there-was-a-fairy," or "but she was a Komachi!" or "when I was a devil of a fellow," and so forth.

"Oh, the babblings of babes, aha! ha!" No one hearing that voice could believe that it was sixty-one winters old. And the appearance of the speaker was a more skilful liar than his voice.

"Through what knotty *karma* or through what heinous crime that we might have committed in our dreams, do we deserve this punishment?" A youthful voice opened fire upon him.

"What punishment?"

"Yes; what else could the love-confession of sixty-one winters be?"

"Ah, well!"

"What I want to know, sir," the young man was desperate, "is how you are going to apologise to your bald head."

Another young man broke in:

“From a saintly, martyr-like motive, then, just to save the situation——”

It was a selfish and at the same time an exquisite pleasure of bullying once for all the old beau into silence that they wanted; but the result was the same: they allowed the young man to tell his little story.

It was on the River Katsura, in the Valley of Arashi-Yama—so went the story of the young man. The water of the stream was almost altogether made up of the melted snow from the high, dustless, lonely world; therefore there was that piquant charm, in the water, like the cynicism of Talleyrand. But the spring and cherry blossoms were already filling the boudoir of good old Dame Nature with the dawn-cloud of satin and mists that were tulle. There was a pleasure boat, and in it two ladies. The servants had gone after something and left the boat moored to the bank. A drunkard came along; insulted the ladies—the young man to the rescue—and Romance was born.

Love at first sight; and what tender leave-taking!

“Talk about the tendrils of morning-glories; the grace of willows! Pshaw! And when her arms became entangled—and all the rest of it, you know. I’m not a novelist, but——”

“Y-e-s!” a lazy hybrid between sneer, laughter, and condescension. “Just then, you honourably condescended to wake up, did you not? And it was really too bad, that terrible cold in your august head and that devilish rheumatism in your honourable legs! Be gracious enough to condescend to enlighten us whether the pebbles on the dry river bed are the best stuff for bedding or not, pray!”

“Just as I thought—you are skeptical. Very well, then. Here is the proof.”

He took out from the breast folds of his *kimono* a brocade sack, very small and dainty as the plum blossom.

“This is her parting gift. I have always carried it in my *kimono*, because it has such a delicious fragrance. Smell it if you like.”

Skepticism bowed, and the scent-sack went the round. The majority of young men laughed at him and told him that his worthy aunt was not proof against thieves. But they believed him. None had ever smelt such a delicate perfume before. There was just one exception to this—Mazima Kumando.

Handsome, rather pale, and with a line of determination dimpled at its corners for his mouth, high brow and an upright figure. He was a newcomer from a distant clan. Our lord met him at Kioto and engaged him at once with much solicitation and liberality. The prince made no mistake in his choice. There were only three men in the entire clan who could handle the sword better than he. And yet, he was employed as the tutor to the young princes.

Mazima Kumando recognised the brocade sack, and he was well acquainted with the delicate perfume.

Years ago he had saved the life of a princess—a sister of his former lord. The grateful lady begged him to accept the

scent-sack. It had been the treasure of the princely house—that little sack whereupon was wrought one of those microscopic miracles of embroidery. And the princess wanted it and the delicate perfume therein to recall to him, in their charming and fragrant way, her thankful heart. When he returned home, he naturally offered it to his lady, and so the responsibility of guarding it fell upon her.

One spring they spent a month at the Capital of Flowers, and the lady went out to see the cherry blossoms of Arashi-Yama. On her return home, she found that she had lost her precious scent-sack. A long and exhaustive search for it;—disappointment was the only reward of it all.

Such, then, was the history of the sack of perfume. That also was the reason why Mazima recognised it at once, with a singular storm of emotions.

An awful pallor fell upon him; the *sake* summer was chilled out of his veins. Such sudden snowstorm of his features could not escape the notice of his merry friends.

“Are you ill? What’s the matter?”

All eyes, in an instant, were upon him. Shadows were gathering in his eyes. They were fixed upon the mat without seeing it. Nearly all who had heard the story believed the teller of the tale: he had never had a reputation of being imaginative. And then, too, appearance was so much in his favour. He was not exactly a sober man at the beginning of his story, nor, indeed, at the end of the telling. But all of a sudden, as soon as his eyes rested upon the death snow of Mazima, who seemed to have recognised the sack, he was a very sober man. One word from him would have saved the situation, and also one, two, three lives—among others his own. But what would you? Men are not gods, and cowardice, more than conscience, makes us fools. Let us be just. Kaneko—the name of the young *samurai*—wanted indeed to say:

“And so you all believe my tale, do you? Ha! ha! ha! It’s nothing but a little joke, a made-up story. I picked up this sack on the bank of Katsura River when I was fishing there on a spring day.”

But he did not.

Suddenly Mazima Kumando rose on his knees, and in a flash—so quickly, indeed, that his hand seemed a mere streak of blur—his sword was bare.

Those nearest him fell upon him, trying to disarm him. One of them lost his life in the attempt. Meanwhile the teller of the tale escaped.

The eight million gods could not, if they tried, make Mazima Kumando question the purity of his wife for a moment. And when the story was told and the tipsy men laughed over it, and when the sack was produced as the evidence, and men believed the teller of the tale, there was nothing for him to do but to wash the insult offered to the stainless name of his wife—after the manner of the *samurai*. And he did.

He was mortified at his sinful awkwardness, and censured himself for it: there was no excuse for him to have missed his foe.

He went home. At the entrance porch of his house the servants announced, “the august has returned!” Above the

steps an uplifted lantern welcomed him home. And in this manner, his lady never failed to meet him since their marriage.

“Rather early to-night, my lord,” she remarked.

No answer. And when the light of the lantern fell upon the ghost-whiteness of his face:

“What, what is the matter, my husband? Something happened, I know. Condescend to tell the humble one, I pray you.”

Of course the story—the whole story—was told her at once; never a secret could exist between Mazima and his wife.

“Madam, a man who murders the honour of a lady, a good wife, should die. That is well. But the criminal awkwardness of my hand!” he concluded.

She could not say anything.

She felt one thing: that her husband had turned into a powerful magnet. And—it was no use—she could not resist him. Her knees pressed steadily toward him. Also, without being conscious, her hands were upon his arm; thrilling and in a tre-

mour they closed upon it tighter and tighter. Her eyes were filled with flood; and the depth of them seemed to recede till one could not measure it. Shadows mysterious gathered into them, and then, all of a sudden, a flash or a spark scattered them all into nothingness. A mortal put on immortality: Lady Mazima was soul.

Her husband had been a god to her. Her heart was his shrine; but at the same time— And now that he had acted like a god in his faith in her, she was surprised.

“In the face of so suspicious an evidence,” she said to herself, “does he think that I’m really a goddess, incapable of a wrong?”

To be sure the lips of her husband had never told her that she was a goddess—the extravagance of the oriental tongue does not permit so extravagant an expression; but nothing prevented him from telling her so in his life-letters. You say women are vain. It seems, however, that it was the hardest thing in the world for Lady

Mazima to believe that she was divine in the eyes of her husband. How could any man without the eyes of a god trust her so completely?

Her eyes burnt upon him. He, however, at the time, seemed drowned in his own thoughts. And in her eyes he became a miracle. It was not very hard to see that she had never been so happy and quite so sad as she was then. The manliness of her husband came upon her with a new meaning; and, at the same time, she realised that her husband's life was numbered with the dew of the morrow's field.

“Noble husband!”

Her voice navigated through innumerable chokings and sobs.

“I will be honoured with a message from our lord to-morrow,” he quietly said. She understood him, of course: he referred to the rite of *hara-kiri*.

“Tell me, precious husband,” she begged, “that we will start together for the Lotus-Land? You will allow me to attend you through the dark paths, will you not?”

"Oh, no! The offender, madam, does he not still live?"

And she begged his pardon.

"Sir, it will not be long," she assured him. "You will wait for me in the shades of the stars. And may all the Buddhas' grace be with my august beloved!"

II

Mazima Kumando became a heroic memory—in that *samurai* fashion which does not seem to tell death from sleep. All that the clan knew of the beautiful young widow was that she begged her father to come to her all the way from her home clan in order that he might support her in her sore hours, and that her father came to her. Why not her mother instead of her father? None knew.

And as the days of his stay heaped themselves into many moons, the Kameyama Clan—the gossip and the curious in it, I mean—wondered if the father of the widow, still at the prime of life, had no

special duty with the lord of his own clan.

One Sugiyama, a young *samurai*, happened to pass along the hedge of the Mazima mansion one dark hour far beyond midnight. The lights in the mansion and the sounds he heard made him halt sharply.

“Sword exercises—fencing at this late hour, upon my soul!—rather at this crazy early hour! And the woman’s voice. The widow’s!”

Evidently his wit was not arranged with an electric button. He sunk very deep in thought. But at last:

“Why, of course—the widow—why, of course!”

And so it came to pass that a chance enlightened this young *samurai* far better than the rest of the clans-people.

But a *samurai* has his code of honour; and the secret was safe.

Now, the father of the widow was, perhaps, the best swordsman of his own clan. Indeed, the horizon of his good lord’s province was too narrow for his fame. That

then, was the reason why the widow sought consolation in her father. The superb skill with the sword was the only thing that could soothe her at that time—not sympathy alone. Every night—when men and things and most of the gods are said to be asleep—in the mystic hours, the watchful stars saw the gentle lady spin herself out of the cleverest web woven by the swift sword-swing of her father.

Six months later—

The widow was still in the very midst of her mourning. And, therefore, the news which flew throughout the Kameyama Castle town, one fine autumn morning, caught the people open-mouthed.

The widow had just sent her challenge to Kaneko.

“The wife of a *samurai!*” they all said, smiling and deeply touched. And the lord of the clan appointed the fifteenth of the month for the day.

From that time people began to count the passage of days impatiently. And at last!

Around the field of honour, embracing

a huge circular space, stood a tall bamboo fence. The *samurais* of the entire clan were out in their ceremonial robes. They were there, so many guardians of the *samurai* honour.

Near the centre of the field sat two inspectors, chosen by his highness the lord of the clan. Time walked very slowly that day. They were very impatient, the spectators; at the same time they respected the solemn weight of the occasion. The silence that sat upon them was of death.

There was an undertow of whispered murmurs and the people swayed as waves.

They caught sight of a slender young lady. She was clad from head to heel in silk, perfectly white—white as if her *kimono* had fallen straight out of the skies with the snow. The cascade of her hair was tied with a single knot of classic simplicity and was thrown back, free to coquet with every idle breeze. Her graceful sleeves were caught up by the cord to afford her arm free play. Her father escorted her to the centre of the field. He was her sponsor.

She was pale, and the stars were in her eyes. Also she was very happy. For was she not, this day, to avenge to the fullest satisfaction of her heart the death of her husband?

If she fell, that would not matter much. For her father could not fail. There was, therefore, nothing for her to fear.

Kaneko was also in white. The duel was unto death.

The *samurai* is by nature gallant. A woman's blood is the darkest stain on his sword. But all was different with him now. He was challenged on the field of honour by a lady. And, therefore, to her was due the respect of doing his utmost—not so much, perhaps, for his life, but for the honour of his sword, to be true to the code of the *samurai*.

She extended her bare arm—made up altogether of white curves of grace and billowing with life—and took her *naginata* in her bud-like fist. The kisses of the sun fell upon the lustre of her skin in stars.

Weapons in hand, they stood face to face. And the beautiful young widow

swept him an exquisite and most irreproachable courtesy. He returned it with one above criticism.

The fatal signal word was cried.

Kaneko's sword met the crescent-like head of her *naginata* with a suppressed *sh!*

Their eyes searched the depth of each other's. Their stars froze. They had, to all the eyes of the spectators, turned into flint images; and one would have said that a ghostly hand, too cunning for the eyes of the flesh, was grasping their weapons rigidly, so that they could not move them.

Thus for fully two minutes. However, one could well afford to doubt, without forfeiting his sense of humour, whether a single one of the onlookers breathed half a breath in all that time.

Then Kaneko, with the daring born of death, cut in with a lightning stroke. All of a sudden the young lady seemed to be suspended in mid air; wrapping her was the diaphanous blur of a silver halo. As for the exact position of her arms and her *naginata*, no naked eye could tell—so

rapid was their movement. But Kaneko was a good swordsman. With all that his soul was chilled within him. The moon-like sheen of the *naginata* flew faster than a wing and searched the unguarded portions of his body like lightning gone mad.

It drove him into desperation.

Believing sincerely that he was making a leap into the very arms of death, he sprang in with a mad stroke.

A heavy thud!—and literally the eyeballs of the spectators almost jerked their heads off their shoulders in their hurry to leap out of their sockets.

A sudden pause in the combat—it was so short, this pause, that you could not measure it save with your imagination. Long enough, however, it was for the eyes to see that Kaneko's last stroke had told. It had beheaded the *naginata* of the lady. With a heavy thud it fell, that glittering crescent head.

Before Kaneko could recover the position of his sword, the headless, but at the same time sharp-cut, *naginata* handle whistled; it flashed past his sword, and—

A feminine voice rang clear: "The life
foe of my husband!"

Pierced deeply through the heart he lay;
and his life was tearing itself away from
him in gasps.

She stood mute over the fallen. Her
stainless grace towered over the stained
humiliation of her foe.

She clasped her hands; eyes closed. She
raised her face and arms slowly toward the
sun. Her lips trembled, and then tears
jewelled her eyelashes. She seemed to be
struggling to say something to some one
in heaven.

The whole concourse of people rose as
if hypnotised; they were afraid to breathe.
All eyes were on the white centre figure
with uplifted arms.

Just then was heard a sweet, mysterious,
far-away voice:

"Oh, husband! Oh, my husband!"

Her father caught the fainting body of
his daughter.

The Death of a Ghost

The Death of a Ghost

The Story of a Japanese Artist

I

The evening of an early summer day, in those *samurai* days of Japan—the days of swords, of poetry, of romance, and of pretty olive-skinned coquettes and of cherry blossoms.

Looking toward the west, you could see the bedclothes of the sun on both sides of Fuji-yama. One would have said of the sunset clouds that some rude hands must have massacred angels without number and so outrageously—they were stained, those clouds, with blood of much richer brightness of red than that of mortals, and also they were covered with snowy downs.

Mimura Kaneyoshi was staring at the sunset. Mimura was an artist, and those who knew him and his passion for the beautiful would doubtless have taken it for granted that the camera obscura of his eyes was busy photographing the picture. Nothing of the sort, however. What he was trying to do was to cut a feminine *kimono* out of the heap of gauze, out of that chaos of glory that was colour, with all the critical refinement of an artist, for her—for Satono Fuji.

Of her nothing unkindly could be said. But she could tell a thing or two to some of her sisters and most of her brother men who, in their ignorant beatitude, dream that the beauty of a person is one of those things which go to the making of a woman's happiness. Her head was covered with that lacquer-like night, full of light, which the Chinese poets are fond of calling "verdant hair." No poniard points were in her eyes which smiled as kindly as the bud-like lips under the pink vibration of her nostrils. The exquisite oval of her cheeks was soft to the eye,

wrapped in its velvety floss, white as the new-born snow.

“The second coming of Onono Komachi!” some of her friends declared.

“In her former existence she must have been one of the white lotus blossoms in the sacred pond of the Buddha-Land,” others believed.

“I am afraid of her,” the irreverent remarked, referring to a manifestation of the fox-woman; “no mere woman can be as fair as she is, you know!”

Without blaming Mimura—for how could they; is there anything more natural for an idolater of the Beautiful than to fall at the feet of O-Fuji?—they shook their heads sidewise over the marriage of the artist and this beautiful woman. Why? they themselves did not know that any more than the mystery of their own being. None the less, they were perfectly sure of the correctness of their judgment.

“She is so beautiful, and you know him!” they all said.

Indeed, the name of Mimura stood for many things—diverse, contradictory things

sometimes. He was one of those strange guests of earth called genius—that amusingly solemn mixture of a child and a thunderstorm—with entirely too much nerves than are convenient to be comfortable in this world, so full of shocks; one who foolishly insists and persists in insisting that this life of beefsteak and butter is a festival of the gods. A *samurai* by birth; but the iron cage of ceremonial codes and the Spartan rigour of military training were not quite to his taste. The little republic of Yedo artists at that time—that charming Bohemia of laughter, of *sake*, of sharp-witted cynicism—came to him and offered him a heaven where his fancy could wing as high as it pleased; also it offered him a brush which would, if he but could, bring down the whole universe of stars; and not only that, but also the kingdom of man's emotions as well as the kingdom of heaven, upon his canvas. Caring nothing for dignity and rank, and longing above everything for the association of the gods and of perfect freedom, he made haste to enter the realm where man-made rank was

a target-doll at which men flung all imaginable ridicule and laughter. So he was a Bohemian: very fond of *saké*, too fond of his art. And I defy any one—except Fuji, of course—to convince him that a blameless, tailor-made dress is at least as good, if not a trifle better, than his rags. No lords of elder memory despised money as heartily as he did. At the same time—as is so often the case with men of art—he had a vivid imagination: he used it and he abused it, this godlike power. When he married beautiful O-Fuji, he did not mean to wed a Hades at the same time. But the fact stands obstinate—it was his jealousy, his savage, unrestrained jealousy, that acquainted him for the first time with a darker world than this.

But as good Providence would have it, Fuji was as sensible and wifely as she was a goddess in the most sacred niche in the temple called Beautiful. To make this impossible miracle of a woman still more wonderful, she was as true, even in her imagination, as the North Star. But, of course, she would not be human without

having something which would rivet her perfection, so to speak, down to earth. That one thing was very far from being a fault—rather a virtue, indeed. Knowing how sensitive Mimura was, she wanted to shield him from all possible annoyances. And so it came to pass, in the course of not a long time, that she had a secret or two of her own—secrets that he did not share.

Very absent-mindedly, one fine morning with his head full of charming colours and glories of the field—May had been painting upon it for twenty days—Mimura walked into his little cottage home. A man's voice was saying something. He also heard his wife's voice:

“He mustn't have the slightest ghost of suspicion of all this—not the slightest.”

“Depend on me!”

It was his brother's voice, this masculine sound. It was as though the last particle of his blood seemed, all of a sudden, to have been driven into his heart. Trembling with a sinister earthquake of

the soul, almost breathless, with a terrible calm on his petrified features, he turned away. Really, he was afraid of himself. No, he could not retain his self-control—to listen to them longer.

“Is it possible? Is it really? Ah! I have thought of it all the time—what a fool, what an ass I am!”

In his studio, upon which he had just turned his back, the conversation between his wife and his brother went on uninterrupted, without a shadow of a suspicion of what was taking place in the heart of that artist walking away down the sunny street, looking very much like a doomed spirit departing from the land of Light.

“You see,” said beautiful Fuji, “my precious husband is sensitive, just like all other great men—all the bright children of high heaven. And it is a crime to annoy him with the humdrum of life. Believe me, brother, I would sooner commission a god to attend to the purchase of muddy radishes. No, no! I can’t bear it. Everything I can do to shield him is the sweetest work of my life. Nothing

makes me happier. But you see I could not attend to this money matter myself; and you are always so good. I really don't know what I would do without you!"

"As you say, sister—yes! I am ever at your service. I quite agree with you about my brother. But heavens! what a tremendous partiality of the God of Luck to have a wife like you!"

After that, there were occasions when the enthusiastic exaltation of his wife over his artistic efforts fell upon the ears of Mimura like an echo from an empty cavern. And the child-thunderstorm sulked. All this not quite two years after their marriage.

II

"*Hei, old chap!*" cried Inouyé after Mimura one day; "a big streak of luck, old boy! Come with me—my treat, my treat! Come!"

There was just one man in all the happy Bohemia of *sake* and wit with whom Mi-

mura enjoyed his cup: that was Inouyé—all others were too weak for him.

“What’s up now? You did not rob any one?”

“Yes; but only a fool, so it doesn’t matter. That picture of a pine tree, you remember—a worthless daub of mine?”

“Yes.” The tone of his voice made it exceedingly ambiguous to what “yes” referred.

“I sold it to a fool of a *daimyo*. Now then, listen! Under a blushing cherry, to the music of nightingales—if you insist on being poetical. Honourably condescend?”

“No! oh, no!”

“No? Well, I’d be—— That’s the first time you’ve declined an offer of that sort. What god has anathematised you?”

“None.”

“What then, in heaven’s name, is the matter with you?”

“Oh, well, you never give me enough—you tickle my thirst into madness and leave it unquenched every time.”

“Aha, ha! old chap, don’t I know you,

you bottomless Shojyo! I will fix you this time, old man—you just wait. I have just bought a cask of *shyochyu*. How's that?"

Inouyé smiled. Nobody can call *shyochyu* weak, it is almost pure alcohol.

"Hum! a cask of *shyochyu*!—that's not enough for a sitting."

"What! I'll bet you twenty pieces of silver that you can't dry it at two sittings, that cask of *shyochyu*."

"Nonsense! I lay you two to one that I will see its bottom at a sitting."

"Heavens! if I didn't know what a merry liar you are!"

"Out with your twenty pieces of silver, then, if your purse is so anxious to throw off its burden!"

So they went. In the tepid twilight of the spring day, sweet and heavy with all sorts of voluptuous fragrance, they drank far into the night. And a wonder came to pass: at last the cask was empty. Mimura gathered the silver heap, shining like corroded moonlight, and pocketed it.

"Look here, Mimura, you better stay just where you are to-night. I will let you

go back early in the morning. You must go home? You may never get home, man!"

"Aha! ha! I—I? There is plenty room for another cask of *shyochyu* here. Ha, ha, ha! Can't walk? What do you mean, *berabo*? Can't stand up? Go to! Get me a baby carriage then. You think I ought to be rocked to sleep in a cradle. What do you take me for?"

In spite of the daring declaration, Mimura did not know when or how he was taken home to his all-anxious wife.

Those were the days when the trick called artificial respiration was unknown. They knew very little of the paralysing effect of alcohol on the cardiac nerves. In the arms of beautiful Fuji her husband was a corpse—there was no sign of breathing; no beat of heart.

At once she sent for her brother-in-law; doctors also. But, of course, an eminent physician was beyond the reach of their circumstances. Mimura was beyond the cunning of medicine, the physicians said.

There was nothing to be done on the

following day but to prepare him for burial.

When the day was done, and the melancholy of night began to fall, Fuji's excess of grief alarmed the brother of the dead.

"Sister, you must rest a while. Sleep a while if you can; you will break down, you know."

"Oh, no, brother, I must watch through the night! Oh, my husband!"

Giving way, all of a sudden, she wept, wept, wept.

At last she raised her head: "Leave me now, brother, will you not? I want to be alone with my husband a while."

Her sorrow was something very strong. He was not so sure of her sanity now—something might happen any time. No, he could not leave her with her husband alone.

"All alone with the dead? You know, madam, I cannot do that. Let me call in one of the lady neighbours to watch with you?"

"Oh, no, no! I want to be alone with him."

And then smiling through her tears:
“ Will you not humour me this once? ”

It was rather late—midnight was not very far ahead of them. Sad rain was falling outside. The chilly, death-like fingers of the damp night stole into the cottage through the *amado*. They shivered.

“ You must not stay in this room. if you insist on staying up.”

“ Oh, please! ”

But her brother-in-law would not hear of it—almost dragged her out of the room of death. A candle was left to keep its lonely vigil over the pallor of the corpse.

Silent, with her chin in her dress collar, her eyes covered with her hands—thus she let the midnight pass over her head.

Silence; and the rain breaking it with its melancholy tread, and winds also with their sobs, making it much more silent. Her brother-in-law, completely forgot by her, was keeping a dragon’s watch over the beautiful wife of his dead brother. By-and-bye, when he was thinking that her sorrow rocked her, baby-fashion, into a doze, she gently let fall her hands from

her eyes, and, without looking at him, she said:

“Good brother, I have prayed to the Buddhas: they understand my heart now. I am quite ready to go and join them—and my husband. I do not want him to journey far in the shadow-land alone without me. I am going to race after him, so I can catch him in a short time. As you see, I am going to leave my mother and sisters with you. Tell them, when you shall see them in their far-away home, that I went away with my husband—as all true wives should do. You will do this for me, will you not? Will you promise me, brother?”

He did not answer her—could not speak. It was a custom of the time with a high-minded woman of the *samurai* class, to think it a shame to survive her husband, especially when there were no children and no expressed will of her husband to that effect. Her brother-in-law understood her perfectly. He was a *samurai*; and sooner would he have robbed her of her virtue than to have prevented her performance of this rite, at once the token of undivided,

all-absorbing love for her husband and also of that philosophic conviction that the casting aside of this robe of flesh could never touch her real life. It was the last sacrament of honour. Moreover, she had no longing to live—and why should she have? The centre and end of her life was cold in the shroud, and to chain her to this life of earth would have been one of the most atrocious of cruelties. No, he would not do that, her brother-in-law.

From between her girdle she took out a short sword, such as the *samurai* women of old Japan used to carry. She drew it; placed it in front of her.

“Brother,” she said again. And she raised her face. And that was the first time that he saw, in the blood-like, uncertain light of the candle, her features wet with tears.

Dews rarely spoil a really beautiful flower. This brother of the artist had the same adoration for the beautiful. And the sight of this beautiful woman, with the cold, moonlike sheen of the blade at her knees—ah! The storm of emotion

whirled him up to a height: it made him dizzy. He naturally forgot himself.

"Oh, sister," he groaned.

There was such a strange ring to that wail of his soul that, absorbed and oblivious to all else in her meditation as she was, it distracted her attention for a second. She raised her white hand and waved back his, which would have seized the sword. Then she sat facing the corner of the adjoining room where her husband lay cold, and prepared herself, as was often done in those days, to address her monologue to her departed lover.

Meanwhile, in the room of death, the damp chill of midnight was taking in charge the shrouded artist—the forsaken of physicians.

When he came to himself, Mimura asked his mind something, he himself could not tell what it was; his mind, very naturally, took it as a joke and disdained to answer. He thought that he heard a voice of a man. The lonely candle was almost dying. But still in its funereal light he could see things which were famil-

iar to him. This was his own cottage. How did it happen that he was lying here? Heavens! what could be the matter with him? He did not know; he felt very stupid. Without asking what made him feel so, he gave himself up to languor. Then he heard:

“In your love, and in that alone, I have had my being——” There was a choking sob and then silence. A feminine voice! Yes, that was her voice, there was no doubt of it—his beautiful Fuji’s voice. Wide awake in a flash, he softly raised himself on his elbow. What was this? Can it be possible? He was dressed like a corpse—all in white. Great stars! was he waking in the land of the Lotus after crossing the Sanzu River unconsciously? But his wife’s voice! And more than ever, he was sure that this was his own cottage home. Why, there was one of his favourite pictures hanging on the wall as in the days of his earthly sojourn.

Then the same sweet voice, but which was this time very much more tremulous and fuller of tears, rose again:

"Unworthy as it was, I have given my all to you—my heart and all—every thought of my mind. Oh, how I loved and worshipped you, sweet lover!"

Her brother-in-law could hold out no longer.

"Ah *korf!* O-Fuji-san!"

When Mimura recognised his brother's voice, he turned all of a sudden into a black fiend. He was struck with a wicked lightning, which brought a stupendous enlightenment in its lurid glare.

So his brother and beautiful Fuji plotted his death! Great heavens! They had killed him with a black magic. And there in his own very cottage, under the roof he had raised with his own hands, as it were, to shelter her flower-like beauty, she was vowing her eternal and ever-constant love to his brother! And that, too, with his body wrapped in its shroud in the very next room! His fury raised him like a ghost flame to his feet. He would tear out the vitals of the unnatural murderers and traitors of his faith!

"Death can't divide us, my love!" the

soft voice said again. So the silence was broken and the sobbing voice smote upon Mimura's ears; and at the same time a savage blow from an unseen hand struck upon his naked heart. It felled him to the floor.

At the sound of the fall, the midnight nirvana of the adjoining room was also torn by two exclamations—one masculine and the other feminine; but which were so mingled that one would have said that they came from one mouth. There was a rush of feet, the impatient tearing aside of the *shoji*. The prostrate shroud was on its feet in an instant.

They rushed in—Fuji with her bare sword, her brother-in-law at her heels.

At the sight of the white apparition, they seemed to have turned into stone. Then they sunk as if they were decaying, rather than melting, prostrate upon the floor.

Before them there stood a ghost, and never in the most horrifying romance was a shadow of the dead so fiendish. The pale features of Mimura were knotted as

the fingers of Chaos in agony. Looking at the fire in his eyes, one would have said that hell opened two holes upon this world. With such a head above the spectral whiteness of the loose robe of the dead, who could doubt that he was a ghost—if ever there was one?

“Oh, husband! Oh, husband, mine!” Fuji cried. She had heard often of the dead coming back to earth to call to him his companion.

“Oh, husband, husband! You came for me. Oh, how happy I am! I will be with you at once. Here, love, take me!”

The keen, cool blade entered her throat. Fuji bowed to death—with her beauty and life also—in a heap of gory *kimono*.

But the ghost did not see this.

Mimura rushed upon his prostrate brother—a starving lion would have had more manners than this furious ghost. Seizing him by his hair, Mimura threw his brother on his back. With his right knee upon his chest, and before the hands of the victim thought of a struggle, he sunk his teeth into his brother’s throat,

“Uh!” Then all was silent—the stiffening of limbs. They tightened more and more, his teeth, till finally they met through the flesh of his brother’s throat.

Then they became rigid.

A certain intensity of emotion always snaps the life-thread in two.

And Mimura, too, was dead.



A Dream on Suwa-Yama



2

A Dream on Suwa-Yama

I

Here I am in a land of bricks, money, and oaths. And if the milk of human kindness does by no means flow in river beds here, there is surely no lack of the milk of cows. And the sun does not have any more clouds to hide behind, nor the stars and the moon any more tears to shed than they do in any other quarter of this sad dirt-ball.

Nevertheless, Nature seems to take a special delight in reminding a fellow such as I, homeless as a whim of wind, that he is a stranger here; that he is an intruder. And do what I may, there will come persistently the hour when my eyes will close, not because of any too much light—for it is very apt to happen in the classic hour

of twilight-pensiveness—and through the half-closed eyes I am made to see, not the embodiment of the most advanced scientific theory of light, but a rustic cottage which an old pine tree used to pat on its shoulder, grandmother-fashion, there on the lap of Suwa-Hill, with its checkered apron of many-coloured flowers; by the lake which is called (most likely because it never disappointed the moon in giving her the perfect silver image of herself even on a stormy night, so still is it) the Mirror of Luna, and within the sound of a cascade, that never-ceasing dancer with the bridal veil of mists.

And the cottage has a story.

II

Not very long after the overthrow of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and the removal of the national capital from Kioto to Tokio (that is to say, in the early days of our foreign intercourse), we came to the port of Kobe, and because we had but one request

to make of our fellow-creatures—namely, to be left alone to enjoy the perfect quietude—we took possession of an out-of-the-world cottage in the bosom of Suwa-yama—my mother and I.

My mother, it may make the story clearer to state, was a very sad woman. In the same battle, on the same historic night, her husband and her brother had passed from this earth leaving behind a very gallant memory—and that only.

The revolution came and the change of many things: among others, the loss of our fortune—estate, treasures, and all. Having none to care for save her son, with nothing wherewith to enjoy even the ephemeral pleasures of life, my mother presented a traditional mask of *samurai* stoicism against the world, and abandoned herself without resistance to perpetual sadness, loneliness of heart, and longing after the spirit of the dead.

That she remained even for a day on earth after the death of my father was a great proof of her love for me. And another token of her affection was the great

pains she took in instructing me in the graceful classics of our art-intoxicated ancestors, and the volumes wherein the most beautiful, as well as the wisest, fruits of China's culture had been treasured.

By a mere accident, a *kakemono* of Okyo, with the picture of a carp ascending a fall upon it, was found at the bottom of my mother's *nagamochi*: and we managed to exchange it for a small plot of land and a cow—a bargain which must have brought to the shrewd business man at least four or five thousand *yen*. We did not regret it. I, because I did not care for or know the value of the picture, and loved the cow and that dimple of Suwa-yama which I took such a pleasure in cultivating with her; and my mother, because a vigorous bud or two of crimson, which the mountain air and the exercise wooed to bloom on my once death-pale cheeks, were fairer to her than all the cherry blossoms of Yoshino. And the days came and went to the quiet, sleepy music of the belfry of a Buddhist temple which was our nearest neighbour.

'The singing of the birds, the sighing of

the winds through the pine needles, the lullabies of the cicadas in the drowsy hour of summer and the hush after the snow had smothered everything to death—all these, somehow or other, gave my mother's lips sweeter and more frequent smiles.

III

One would have said that she was amusing herself, if he had watched my mother clothe me, on my eighteenth birthday, in the ceremonial robes of my father. But the truth is that she was in her most solemn mood. And although the law of the country forbade *samurai* to wear a sword any longer, yet on that morning she made me carry the two favourite swords of my father. And naturally I was the proudest of mortals; and as for my mother, she was, if possible, somewhat prouder than I.

As I was about to step out to greet the sun in my new dignity, at the very threshold of the cottage I saw a stranger, and in a second more, following close behind her,

another who was a greater stranger than the first.

Both were ladies. To scurry mouse-fashion was not compatible with my *kami-shimo* and the swords; and so, with a greater moral courage than any one would be willing to give me credit for, I stood my ground.

“Pardon me,” said the stranger, the first lady. “We were not aware upon whom we were intruding.”

“Be good enough to overlook the strange madness of the humble one’s attire,” said I, with the first breath which came to me, and explained as briefly as I could the circumstances of my birthday and my mother’s whim on that occasion. The lady, who was a Japanese woman, expressed her delight at what she called “this unexpected pleasure,” and asking me to excuse her, she turned to her companion, who was not one of our country-women, and spoke long with her. It was not hard reading from their eyes that the theme of their chat was either myself or our cottage, and seeing the brightness of

the steel-blue eyes, and hearing the bird-like notes of her exclamations, I marvelled much at what interest she might be able to find in a character like me, in a cottage like ours.

“We have been wandering,” explained the Japanese lady, who evidently was the interpreter and companion of her of the sunbeam locks, “for many, many a day in your neighbourhood. What a charming spot this is.”

“We think that Nature is especially gracious to us here, even to the point of prodigality.”

“And you two, alone, the honourable presence and your august mother, occupy this cottage? It might as well house five or six more, might it not?”

“As your honourable judgment, the cottage is quite too large for us. Nevertheless, finding it better so than to have it too small, we try to teach ourselves not to quarrel with the existing condition of things.”

And I smiled.

Meanwhile, I confess, I was never so

nervous in all my life before. I felt that the lovely eyes of the white stranger were burning into every inch of my face. And I could not help thinking within myself what a curious person she must be. Still, I justified her easily enough on the ground of my extraordinary dress and swords.

The young lady interpreter turned away from me to her foreign companion. I stood charmed as a cobra by the sound of their voices—what a fascination there is in a voice whose utterance is beyond the comprehension of one's mind.

However, it was not long before all the secrets of the magic tongue were mine. The two ladies were very anxious to spend some time away from people, from the wail of the murdering civilisation, in the cool of the mountain shades, by the silver ribbons of runnels. Would we let them share the cottage with us? The food? Why, they would attend to that themselves.

“Will you kindly call again to-morrow? Meanwhile, I will consult the pleasure of my mother.”

IV

I talked with my mother about it. There must have been something in my tone, for there came a sad smile upon her lips—half playful, half reproachful, and which seemed to say, “Are you not satisfied with your mother?” As I became more and more enthusiastic in my talk, that smile opened reluctantly—much after the manner of an orchid bloom which, under the coaxing caresses of a warm and glad spring breeze, blossoms out from the mosses of the time-pensive grey of the rocks. And, when you come to think about it, there was nothing so very strange in it all. I knew my mother well; but she was the only woman who was known to me, and as for the great world, whistling, laughing, whining, and cursing about me, I knew nothing of it. And you will not blame me if for months and months I never could run away from the idea that the young lady with the face of the colour of dawn, and, like it, soft, dreamy, chaste,

with the dainty bits of southern sky for her eyes and an aureole for her hair, must have rained from some happy cloud for the edification and comfort of us all—she must have been sent to us, mother and me, through the mercy of the gods. And the thought made me happy more than I can tell. For we have prayed often. And of all the pleasures of earth there is none, perhaps, so complete as that which comes from the assurance that our prayers are heard and approved by the Divine. For it at once proves the existence of the gods; the gracious goodness and sweetness of their nature; the tender love of the Divine toward the human, and the oneness—in that we could make our feelings felt by Him—of the Great Eternal and man; and that this ridiculous atom of dirt is, after all, a god playing a fool. And in all candour, are these not, when you sift the matter to its heart, the great corner-stone upon which the edifice of human happiness is reared?

V

My mother, I well knew, would suffer and bear almost all the known and unknown things for my sake—to make me happy. For me she would have stepped down into Hades with the sweetest of smiles. With all that I had much of misgiving about the coming of the ladies to live with us.

My mother was of the race that knew the foreigners as “red-bearded barbarians,” and so proud were they of the older Japan that they would sooner, very much sooner, have committed *hara-kiri* than to pollute, as they thought, body and soul by social contact with the foreigner. At the same time I was not completely deserted by Hope. For, indeed, was I not myself reared on the very milk of the conservative Japan? Had I ever heard a single favourable word about the white stranger? Never. And yet had I not felt such a melting affinity toward her; had not my eyes forgot that the visible

universe was not quite comprehended by the graceful lines of her figure and features? If it was so with me, why not with my mother? And then, too, there seemed no trace of anger upon her when I had mentioned the matter, and that faint smile of hers!

The young lady interpreter came the next day; and as she wished to see my mother alone, I left them together and went out to plough.

On my way home from the field I thought that I heard some one calling my name. Turning round I saw a white hand winnowing the sun-bright air.

“We will see you to-morrow morning, Narumi-san.”

And I saw standing, framed in a patch of yellow rape, the figure of the interpreter.

At home: “I gave my consent to the ladies. Is it agreeable with you, Masao?” my mother said to me.

That night, after our evening meal, as we sat by the hearth and watched many marvellous mystic pictures which the

flame rising and falling limned on the crepuscular canvas of the room, my mother told me the brief story of the white stranger, as she had heard from the interpreter.

VI

She was a daughter of America—a Virginian by birth. She was very unhappy. Under other circumstances she might have been famous. For her unhappiness came from the ardent adoration of the beautiful—that was her God. Like a female Columbus, and of a far higher and more daring ambition, she launched out on her voyage of discovery—she would find her God! Life was kind to her. Wealth, beauty, health, liberty were all hers. And there she was in Japan, still on her pilgrimage, after having worshipped at the shrines of the European masters. She had been in Japan already for one year and a half, wandering about from a temple to a palace; from a godown to a castle, and all the while calling back to life, with the

magic touch of her idolatrous fire for art, a piece of brown parchment, a fragment of a *fusuma*, a broken cornice, a tattered *kakemono*, a mutilated image, a torn wall upon which laboured our ancestors, who had forgot meat and raiment for a brush or a chisel and who had deemed it the wisest thing on earth to condense the life of fifty years within a compass of a few feet. At last this lady who was so hard to please found something—or rather a vision was born within her—or to quote her own words, “a star fell into my dream as it had fallen into that of the Blessed Maya, who had given birth to Gotama Buddha.” She would give colour and form to this, her dream. Like the swordsmiths of Japan, who used to purify with complex ceremonies their workshops as well as themselves before addressing themselves to the sacred work, she would bury herself in this kindly temple of Nature; in this solitary cottage with us; in the studio whose screens are green hills and whose flower-carpeted floor is seamed by the mountain rills.

Her name was Viola Randolph.

VII

Miss Randolph and her companion, whose name was Sakabe Toki, came into our cottage, and it became, to all appearances, the tryst of summer and winter. I mean this: In the rooms of my mother, there was that severe simplicity of elder Japan; in the apartments of our friends every inch of the wall, aye, the very ceiling, was covered with pictures, *objets d'art* gathered from all over the world, with colours that were a defiance to the brightness of the sun. Two extremes were thus brought together, and the effect of the contrast was startling.

“What do you think of their rooms?” I asked of my mother. And, to confess the truth, I expected her to say something complimentary, but which would, in reality, mean that it was as rich as a curio shop.

“It is very marvellous,” she said, with a ring of sincerity in her voice. “I won-

der if it is her own character which she has tesselated in that medley of colours and things? Her room impressed me as a person—a strong, passionate, delicate character—which is mad because it cannot express itself freely, naturally. Above all, her room as it is, is not a *thing!*”

This, coming from my mother, was a compliment which I certainly did not dream any mortal could deserve.

My mother took a trip of discovery into the bottom of her *nagamochi*—a long trunk—and out of many rolls of *kake-mono*, she took one.

“Take this to Miss Randolph, and present it with the sincere esteem of your mother.”

VIII

The moon was white one night, and the path climbing the hill in front of our cottage was silver. I was returning home with a bunch of flowers—night blooms, whose eyes are too modest for the glare of

the sun, so that to see them wake one has to go to the cliff with the fall of the dews.

And I came upon her seated on a moss-cushioned rock; she was looking into the lake. Upon it many a pale hieroglyphic was thrown down from the stars and the moon. And she, like a prophetess, seemed to be reading the mystic message. I stood still, mute as a devotee before a goddess. How I would have loved to offer the bunch of flowers and—a prayer. But, of course, I could not speak a word of English, and I was ignorant as to the extent of her knowledge in the Japanese. Still had I the daring (curse my timidity!) we might have managed to make ourselves understood. Then an idea came to me. Let me resort to the speech of the eyes.

“Miss Randolph,” said I, with a voice as slender and tremulous as the rill pouring its silver threads into the lake.

She started nervously, turned round, and, when she recognised me, smiled gently at me.

“A beautiful evening, sir,” said she in Japanese. I meant to hold out the flow-

ers. But all of a sudden I forgot it completely as I saw her face.

Silence—incomprehensible delirium.

I stammered out something in Japanese, and, suddenly remembering my flowers, I offered them to her.

“Thank you—such beautiful flowers!”

IX

After that, there was—it might have been all my fancy—a strange light in her eyes. And whenever my gaze met hers, my eyes always dropped to the floor, and untimely maple leaves spread themselves on my cheeks.

X

Half a year had passed since the ladies came to bloom under our cottage roof. One fine morning I was starting out to gather a bundle of fagots.

“Wait, I will go with you,” she called from the veranda.

Under the shade of a pine I gathered a cushion of pine needles for her to sit down and rest while I gathered my dry branches.

“How I love this life! I wish I could live this way all my days!”

“And if you would let me be by your side, I would be the happiest boy you ever saw!” I said. No, upon my word, I had no esoteric meaning to my words. She turned her eyes quickly toward me, and the single glance changed the meaning of my simple sentence completely. I saw the change, and, instead of protesting against it with my original, innocent look, I acted quite the contrary.

A second, and a very short one, too; in a flash—how rapidly, without the slightest warning, does the entire universe shift for a man!

I might have laid my hand, all in a tremor, upon her arm; I might have turned my face, burning with colour like a sunset, upon her; I might have gone so far as to purse my lips a little, to squeeze all the dreams of my life into my eyes—I do not know.

What I am certain of is that I found myself at her feet. She was looking into my eyes as if they were a pair of very, very deep wells, and as if she were reading something at the bottom of them.

Something like pity came into her face—a faint smile.

“Let us go home; have you gathered your fagots?”

I, of course, had forgotten them altogether.

XI

I did not see her again that day.

The next morning my mother told me that our guests were going to leave us that self-same day. She did not seem to be surprised at its suddenness. At the news I hid my face—forgetting that the face is not the only mirror of man’s emotions.

“Yes, it is a great pity—it grieves me very much,” said my mother kindly, as if she wanted to soothe me. “We became very much attached to them and it is very hard to give them up. But as the Lord

Buddha says: 'A separation for every meeting.'

There were reasons why I could not take it as philosophically as my mother. In truth I had all I could do to keep my emotions from betraying me.

As soon as I could tear myself away from my mother I ran to the hill, whose calm, like the benediction from His very hands, had comforted me so often.

There, under the elder pine, was the cushion of pine needles which I had gathered for her and upon which she had sat. It retained the impression of her body, and that of my knees there, too, at her feet.

"I will build a shrine here," said I to myself.

XII

When I went home I found Miss Randolph gone.

"Here is something which she wanted me to give to you," said her lady companion to me. It was a pen sketch of a

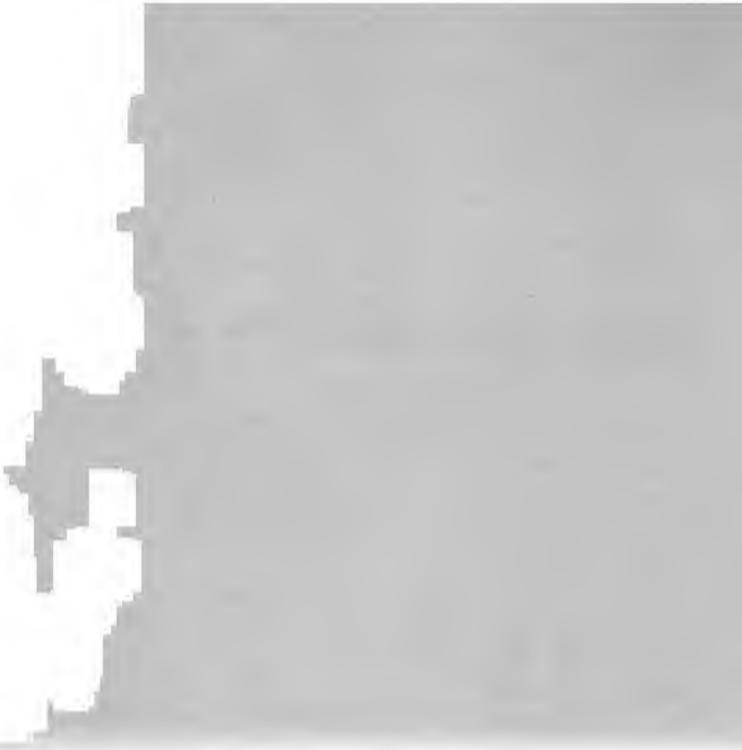
face—a beautiful girl face. It was very easy to see that the face was asking the question: "What can I do?" and under it was this strange word, "Perhaps."

On the back of the picture was this sentence in English:

"When you are ready, look me up in California and we will talk over the old times together."

This was now seven years ago.

**In the Old Castle Moat of
Kameyama**



In the Old Castle Moat of Kameyama

I

It is aged, that castle moat, covered now with lotus, white, red, all of golden hearts and very fond of holding up the dews, on summer mornings, toward the sun, that he may turn them into diamonds.

Fishing has an intoxication all its own; the wine knows nothing of it. The strain on the line—ah! upon my honour it turns my nerves into so many *samisen* strings full of charming confusions. *Berabo!* the dance of a two-foot carp on your hook sends a great big shooting star through you—the white-teethed grin, cold sweat, and the eyes so full of anxiety that one might say of them that they were gazing

at a dying lover! Ah, yes, exactly! And it is not within the horizon of the piety of a youngster (and I dare say that it would make but little difference if he be a scion of a starched Puritan) to refrain from the murder of the cold-blooded brethren of the water.

The castle moat has many reverend memories. We boys knew of them; we also were taught to respect them, like decent offsprings of *samurai*. What would you? You cannot make a saint of a tot in the same easy way in which you can peel black potatoes white. And, our fathers and grandfathers saw our fishing lines spreading the delicate comb-webs of ripples on the nirvanic face of the lotus-decked moat a trifle too often to be comfortable for us.

"You must not do that, child," my grandfather used to say kindly; "never in the castle moat. Haven't you seen the white catfish with a chisel in its mouth?"

"A white catfish, august grandfather?"

Ah, well! we knew all about it—we indeed ought to have known it, seeing that

we had heard the same story told us some few thousand times over again. Nevertheless there was one thing strange about it all—we never became tired of that story. Having heard it a thousand times, we wanted to hear it once more.

“Yes, child, haven’t you heard of the white catfish in the castle moat? No? Well, well!”

I, of course, took advantage of the short memory of my grandsire, and, sad wretch that I was! felt no shame at all.

And this is the story. With this difference—my grandsire was a good storyteller, and there is that in me that makes me dreadfully sceptical of the wonderful doctrine of heredity.

II

Dusk was falling on the summer-kissed flowers of Kameyama savannah. And with it there came into the town, as if he fell straight out of the blue matrix of sunshine, a stranger in rags, rather young and

with features and carriage which were much at war with his coarse robe and mendicant hat.

“Yes, Prince Akechi is about to build a castle,” an accommodating citizen, proud of the new dignity of the town, told the stranger.

“Kindly condescend to point out the way to the palace of the august prince.”

“Through the avenue of pines,” said the citizen, pointing ahead.

At the palace entrance:

“The august prince does not receive all strangers, you must understand,” said the gatekeeper kindly. He meant that the palace was no place for such as he.

“The humble one is by profession and by the gracious shadows of the august above, a worker in rocks, plaster, and woods. A castle is built already in my mind. For the sake of the unworthy one, condescend to tell the august prince that nothing is lacking but some rocks and wood to make the sun happy in smiling upon a castle that would laugh at its enemies.”

The gatekeeper listened. Most certainly the stranger did not talk after the manner of beggars. Prince Akechi Mitsuhide, his lord and master, had just seen one of the daring dreams of his imagination, phoenix-winged as it was, turned into a chapter of history. His name wedded fame as the tactician of Nobunaga. He had brain; of that he was sure. And inasmuch as he did not see any wisdom in being a second in the eyes of Heaven and his Majesty, the *Ten-Shi* (which, by interpretation, means the Son of Heaven), when he could be—aye, should be—the first, he dreamed a dream. One thing above all was needed—a formidable, an unassailable castle. He would have it at any cost. And it was noised abroad throughout the provinces that Prince Akechi, the brain of Nobunaga's camp, would stint neither wealth, rank, nor honours to him who would give him a masterpiece of a castle which would, under a kindly smile of fortune, turn into a cradle of that daring dream of his.

“Master,” said Prince Akechi, when

the beggar-architect stood before him, "pray condescend to tell me what are the elements that are essential to a good castle."

"That it should look into the eyes of its enemies and tell them what ridiculous idiots they are," said the stranger. "And it must also have that which will make itself the beloved of the gods."

"Akechi Mitsuhide would humbly listen," said the prince, "to the master, if he would paint to the humble one the castle which is in his mind."

After an interview of the length of two drums, the prince said to the beggar-architect: "Master, the force of ten thousand picked workmen and the resources of five mountains and of the entire province are at your command."

III

To-day the travellers who have stood on the Pyramids come often to the Castle Town of Kameyama, and when we tell them that the rocks they see in the ruin of

the castle were brought down from the top of Atago Mountain they smile at us and look very smart, and their eyes take unto themselves an air, very superior, and as though they were resting on credulous idiots. And when we venture to tell them a simple fact—namely, that some of those huge stones were fifty feet high on the top layer of the castle wall, they become very frank in their laughter, and the twinkle of their eyes makes no secret of a defiant declaration, “What do you take us for?”

Modern sciences are very proud; they have many complicated machines. Our forefathers had none of them. And they worked what the sciences of the day label as miracles.

Well, out of the blue surface of the moats, very placid, full of religious flowers, the granite walls of the castle rose, concave in shape, like an arm of a huge grey crescent—quite impossible for mortals to scale. And the castle also rose.

Nor did the din of work go to bed with the sun, but through all the stretch of the dark echoed from star to star till it woke

Dawn and forced her to listen. It rose like an altar full of the aspirations of earth, full also of the ambitious prayers of mortals—it rose steadily, the castle.

Thrice Atago Mountain donned its white, priestly robe to go through its period of purification at the birth of New Year's, and at last the dream of the beggar-architect stood, dressed in rocks and iron, very much taller than the pines two centuries old, so that the sun, after forsaking all hill-tops, still kept his bright arms around the turret, sinking reluctantly, reminding you of a golden-haired girl kissing her lover good-night. The sight made Prince Akechi wild indeed. He looked at it as if he had never watched it before; utterly, as it seemed, forgetting that he had risen seven times many a night just to spy, between and through the sombre arms of pines and cedars, the moon playing with the edifice.

The preparations to celebrate the completion of the castle had been going on for over a year.

It was a kindly day, white with autumn

frost, when they put the last tile on the topmost roof, and the very next day was set for the celebration.

In the garden opposite the grand entrance of the castle they built a dais. And nothing was lacking on the day of the crowning of the labours of the beggar-architect to make it as dramatic as possible.

Amid the whiteness of intense emotion, Prince Akechi sat on his dais, simply clad in his ceremonial robe. Below the dais, extending toward the entrance of the castle, was an avenue, so to speak, of his ministers; about them, under the clear autumnal sky, on the thick, padded mats and silk cushions, sat the entire retinue of *samurai*.

The faint, woman-like suggestion of the scent of *sazankwa* (*Camellia sasanqua*) was in the air. A silence, which seems to be an inseparable companion of a grand spectacle, sat among the spectators also.

All of a sudden:

“The builder of the castle!” was announced.

And the proud *samurai* bowed their heads.

He walked up the avenue of ministers—the architect, dressed precisely as he had been when he entered the town of Kameyama for the first time, in rags which had evidently had more history than comeliness. A palace minister escorted him to the dais of the prince. It was not customary for a prince to rise to his feet. Prince Akechi rose. The man in rags, as was the custom of the day, prostrated himself. The prince said to him gently, "Rise, my master."

And the architect obeyed. So they stood face to face—the prince and the builder of the castle. The prince caught his friend, the architect, by his arm, as if the rags and purple were equal in rank, and, pointing to the castle, he said:

"Behold your work," (and minding but little the extravagance of his words,) "the pride of heaven and earth and my humble heart."

Silence.

“Ye gods!” and the lips of the architect quivered. The despair in that exclamation paralysed the prince. He did not understand. The architect started toward the castle: the prince held him back—a groan was heard.

“Pray,” said the prince, “what is wrong? Speak!”

“Behold, august prince, the castle leans toward the rise of the sun!”

There was silence, a revelation, a triumph in that brief second that passed.

“Ah, my master, it is superb! The castle points to the home of my star! Joy supreme!” The prince looked toward the morning, toward Atago Mountain, and a very peculiar light came into his eyes. Some of his most intimate counsellors saw it; they, and they alone, understood the meaning of it. Nobunaga was at Kioto, beyond the mountain, toward the rise of the sun.

“Down with the castle!” was the stern retort of the builder.

“Silence! I forbid—I command you” Prince Akechi, as you see, was

not such a great master of his own temper as he was of military tactics. The architect smiled—full of sarcasm, more full of amusement. Said he:

“August prince has entrusted into my hand the entire power over the new-built castle.”

“But I command you. See how perfect it is—the castle! It is the supreme content of my heart! Perfect! The gods made its head point to—”

The architect, musingly, doubtless looking into his own heart, as a man in a dream, all absent minded, slipped from the grasp of the prince and walked away.

“Stop—hold! Master, stop!” the prince called after him; but the man in rags was as indifferent as Fate.

• • • • •
Of course the castle came down very much faster than it went up, and indeed on its second journey upward its steps were surer and quicker on the ladder of clouds.

Prince Akechi stormed with rage a while, and then, seeing that he was dealing

with a man half mystery, half divine, whose every action was a defiance against the command of a mere mortal, abandoned his struggle.

IV

About two years later the Kameyama palace received a strange guest. The introducer of noble guests announced in the hall of audience: "Princess of Yechigo passes into the hall!" And Prince Akéchi received the wife of one of the most powerful princes of the North. Her daughter was with the princess.

"What an unexpected honour and pleasure! Really, such kindness of the gods encourages the humble one to be pious—believe me, madam."

"The humble one is very happy to present the compliments of the clan of Yechigo to the first warrior of the realm and—as she is told—the brain of Nobunaga's camp. And the unworthy one counts herself fortunate to worship, for the first time, your august face. For some men are like

the gods—their names are so familiar, their faces are rarely seen.”

Prince Akechi was a thorough diplomat—nothing escaped him. Nevertheless, he was unable to fathom the mission of the princely lady, and the eloquent conversation gave a bit of fine literature to the Book kept, as they say, somewhere by the recording angel.

“Sire, it is an affair of the heart, not of State, that has brought the humble one to your august presence.”

Prince Akechi frowned.

“Prince of Yechigo, my humble consort—you are aware of his disappearance some five years ago, are you not? He left behind him only the trace of the cloud. Murder was suspected—many other possibilities. The search and the waiting! Details are tedious, prince. All of a sudden news reached me that the Prince of Yechigo is now among the builders of the august castle.”

His eyebrows rose a little; his eyes narrowed.

“Ha! Your humble servant is enlight-

ened!" he said. "Allow me to summon your august consort at once!"

"Oh," said she, with something of nervous shock, quite unbecoming to her dignity, "my lord must never know of my presence here—never should he suspect it—till the work is done; till—"

The change of colour, as well as the confusion of her handsome features, told a story, unintelligible to Prince Akechi; not at all a strange one, however, and which could be stated briefly.

Through all her married life, the princess had always opposed the artistic mania of her husband, and as so many men of genius fuming under domestic tyranny had done before him, he simply bolted—that was all. With all that, the simple story was a tragedy. And the reason of it all was because she was madly in love with her husband, and, like so many other women of her rank, of imagination and of mental force, she was very ambitious for him. She relied upon the charms of her personal beauty, upon her wit, upon the strength of the chain called social usages, and felt,

unhappy lady! quite equal to the task of directing the course of his life. A rough awakening!

“As for that,” said Prince Akechi, “the new castle has been completed.”

“Completed!”

“In fact it was finished some days ago; but, yielding to the pleasure of my architect, I have placed the day of celebration three days hence—the day of good omen. Madam will see her lord, then, on that day of his triumph. And her humble servant begs for the pleasure of witnessing the happy reunion of her highness and the august Prince of Yechigo!”

V

Of the body of the beggar-architect there remained only a heap of sallow ashes; a strange fire called fever had burnt it. In place of his will and nerves of the strength of iron there was only weariness and—an unearthly thrill.

After the completion of the castle, he would wait ten days at least to see if this

time the edifice would hold its head erect. Because his almost wrecked frame could not stand the strain of watching the castle through the ten days, he was carried away to a summer palace in the mountain. It was agreed that he should be conducted back blindfolded to the top of the southern wall. That was the spot where they would put the dais of the prince on the day of celebration. There one could look down into the moat and at the same time he could command a more perfect view of the castle than from any other point.

The day was superb—this day of second celebration.

And the *samurais*, as on the first occasion, were present in all their ceremonial elegance.

And the castle? None could tell how or when; but, as before, it made no secret of its longing for the break of day. Prince Akechi knew of it. He had a scheme in his head as well. He would have his architect led to the top of the wall blindfolded, in front of his dais; he would tear off the bandage with his own hand, and, in the

sudden blaze of light, in the bewilderment of revelation, he would try somehow to cheat the acute perceptions of the architect. Moreover, he relied much upon that dramatic excitement of delivering the Prince of Yechigo into the embraces of his wife and daughter as the supreme reward of his labours! He, who knew nothing of the inner history of the Prince of Yechigo, was also ignorant what a monstrous piece of irony that sort of reward would be in the hand of the beggar-architect. The rest he left, as all the happy people are wont to do, to Fate.

He was there in front of the dais, blindfolded, on the top of the wall overlooking the moat—the builder of the castle, the princely artist in rags. The castle stood to his right, with its head heavily pillow'd on the haze over the mountains which the worshippers of the sun called “The Cradle of Day.” On his left, a hundred feet below, the waters of the moat were rippling, bedecked with all their ancient diamonds in honour of the occasion.

Prince Akechi rose: with him also, at

his right, the Princess of Yechigo and her daughter.

“Master builder! The gods are content and are pleased! Heaven has sent to its unworthy servant this wonderful gift through your hands!”

Prince Akechi tore off the bandage.

“Behold, master, how straight it is! How erect in its proud dignity.”

At the same time:

“August father!” cried a child’s voice.

“My lord! Oh, prince!” a woman’s voice.

And two pairs of delicate arms were stretched toward the man in rags.

“Behold also, master,” said Prince Akechi, with a sweeping gesture toward the princess and her daughter, “Your supreme reward!”

But these the architect did not seem to hear. His eyes shot at the castle. In a fixed, awful stare they remained nailed to his dream made stone.

Fearing very much that, after all, the builder might discover the inclination of the castle, and in the feverish haste of one

swept into the rapids leading to a cataract, Prince Akechi almost shouted in the ears of the beggar-architect:

“Prince of Yechigo, behold your august consort and daughter!”

The architect seemed to have turned deaf all of a sudden, and his gaze strained under the full knot of frowns. When Prince Akechi, irritated almost beyond endurance, tried perforce to turn the architect’s attention upon his wife and daughter, the man in rags made a gesture of annoyance, full of meaning, though very absent minded, which was majestic indeed.

Blood streamed into the architect’s eyes; madness also.

“And so——” he hissed between his teeth.

“Oh, august father! Father!” a child’s voice.

The architect took out a chisel from a fold of his rag *kimono*. Silence did not dare to breathe. He took the chisel between his teeth.

“And so——” he almost sighed this

time—his voice breaking against the chisel between his teeth.

Suddenly there was a woman's scream. The sound of a falling body followed it.

A hundred feet below, where the sacred lotus bloomed on the nirvanic waves of the moat, one saw a white fountain rise all of a sudden—a few seconds. And thence came up also the sound of a plunge.

And there is a white catfish in the moat of Kameyama Castle with a chisel in its mouth—so my grandfather told me.



A Geisha

A Geisha

A Japanese Love Story

You could almost see the sun of the south in the warmth of her olive skin; in her dark eyes, the phosphorescent glow of her native seas, and her lips told you where the pomegranate grew. She was from the coast of Kyushyu.

It was a good, quiet place, her native town. But the horses on the hillsides were hungry; so also her imagination. She read newspapers. They told her the story of Miss A. and Miss Z.; how they made their name, filled their boudoirs with the sighs of men, their adorations, their smiles. Why, then, should not she as well? Her imagination was southern, and she had the self-confidence that was of the north. And

many a time had she asked of her mirror if she were really as beautiful as "that"?

Tokio is full of such girls. Men sneer at them, and good women sigh as they watch the almost invariable road they march through the wickedness of the capital city. But O Chika's was the partiality of tutelary gods. She came to the city to work her way; and she did work. But she was ambitious.

There is just one way open for a girl of beauty and ambition and yet of no name, no education, to enter the society of men of wit, rank, and wealth. And that way leads through banquet halls. The *Geisha* is a professional entertainer, a companion of wines and songs, and she is found in a palace, and if her position is not as philosophical as that of the spider, it is more sociable. O Chika saw this road.

At one of the dinners given in honour of a man who had written a book on the other side of the world and made entire Japan fall in love with him, O Chika met a young man on the veranda commanding the picture-like garden of the Tokio Club.

“Mademoiselle, I have something to tell you which I am sure you will not believe.”

“Why, sir, if I may be pardoned for my curiosity?”

“Because it is too good, too pleasant.”

“Sir, the world is too sad to deny a pleasure to a girl like me,” she said to him.

“Well, then, mademoiselle, for some time I wanted to cage a fairy in order to paint her. I am an idolater, and my deity is the Beautiful. As you may know, I am an artist. I went into the land of dreams to hunt for her. When I met you I saw my mistake. The other day I refused to paint Countess M., for I worship and serve none but Beauty. Would you condescend to count this as one of many trophies, and . . . ?”

A week or so later she was in his studio.

At work there, with perhaps one of the most perfect models who has ever posed before an artist, Kagawa Yuko completely forgot the world; but evening parties, the leisure hours of great ladies, the chats of clubs and newspapers persisted in remembering him.

Gossip is a narrow-minded imp, and when it saw O Chika, a mere mortal, outweighing the whole globe on Kagawa's scale, it did not like it—and said so in its low, far-reaching whispers. The artist's sudden disappearance from tea and cake played on all the different chords of the metropolitan humours—some laughed, some sighed, some sneered, some frowned, and some were thoughtful enough to write to him (on dainty, perfumed, crested note-papers) that they could not believe their own eyes and ears—which certainly was a very bad state of things.

Kagawa received a letter one day which he read, because it had the postmark of his native town upon it. It informed him that he was to have the pleasure of entertaining a party of which his sister was a member, and that he was further to be honoured to act as its guide in Tokio. As the token of his appreciation of the pleasure and honour, he said to O Chika:

“This life is full of trials—give me a bit of philosophy to bear them gracefully!”

O Chika gave him a smile, which served him better than a Confucian maxim.

The party did not stay longer than a month, but when it left Tokio one of the young ladies carried away more blushes, and dreams, and smiles than her baggage brought into the capital. Kagawa was engaged to Takamatsu Teruko.

It was a case of love at first sight. Miss Takamatsu was from one of the very best families; she had money, for which Kagawa did not care; but at the same time she had grace and naïveté, which were very rare in the city, and for which the artist did care much.

O Chika . . . Oh, of course, but . . .

O Chika, who came to him just as soon as the party had gone away, did not know of this. It was a very simple news to communicate, but when she entered into the studio with a smile, Kagawa had to turn his head away. He had promised himself to tell her everything, the very first time he would see her. He broke his word; but it was to himself that he proved false, so

he did not deem himself unworthy the name of gentleman.

He told her that he was going to finish the picture in a few days now. And she, looking at the canvas, said to him:

“That branch of the blooming cherry must be very hard to break, for I have been trying for three months now!”

When she was gone he said to himself, by way of consolation, “This must happen some time or other. I haven’t known her much more than a year. But heavens! How hard it is. I have not wronged her, of course—that is . . . but . . .”

“She is the most beautiful woman I ever saw,” he added, as if there were any connection between these statements.

“Well, what she wants is a name—fame, fortune, perhaps. Very well, I will give them to her. If this picture will not bring them to her, it is none of my faults.”

That was the last thing he said that day. He put out the light and tumbled into his couch, but he could not find Sleep hiding in any of its corners or folds.

She was all smiles now, and very much

happier than others, because she had had clouds, dense clouds, too, in the earlier days of her struggle. The pathos of this beautiful girl thanking Future in advance with smiles that were the joys of gods, went straight to Kagawa's heart—it would have touched the heart of a stone Buddha on a country road as well. There is a pleasure that passes the understandings of the world-wise which comes to a woman, I am told, when her confidence in man builds a pedestal for him and her devotion translates him, a weak mortal, into a god, so that he could more becomingly sit upon it. That pleasure was beaming out from every pore of O Chika. By that time she came to know much of the world, something of human nature, too—only thoroughly to despise it—but then her Kagawa, who, indeed, was in the world, was not of it.

Here, then, was a beautiful woman who was thoroughly happy. You cannot blame the gods for getting jealous of her, a trifle.

But then men are so queer—and Kagawa was, after all, a man—when such a

picture of joy and comeliness as O Chika sits beside him he must go hunting for something that will make him thoroughly wretched. And, with smiling O Chika by his side on the divan of the studio, on that early summer day, it would have been rather hard for you to find a more miserable man in the city of Tokio.

His voice was tremulous.

“O Chika, I am afraid that you will hate me before you leave me to-day,” he began. The tone of voice rather than the words frightened her.

“Why, what’s the matter, Kagawa-san?”

She turned sharply round and looked at him. The eyes of the artist, of this idolater of the Beautiful, which used to hang on her every look and expression, now seemed to prefer the monotonous, blank mat to the most beautiful of speaking features.

“The will of one’s parents must be obeyed, you know,” was the solemn opening sentence of the criminal. It was a great sacrifice for him—so he said. Oh,

what a loathsome fondness for virtues a sinner has!

“One must settle down sometimes, you know. One cannot continue this sort of life all the time, and——”

She was staring at him so intensely that his face seemed to her like a blur. She remained silent.

“I want you to be reasonable, O Chika—I know you will. You know how much I love you—one can’t help but to love you. Oh, I am wretched! It’s all right if one could do just what he likes in this world—but——”

You might talk as much as you like and you could never convince O Chika that it was possible for Kagawa to lie. It took more time, however, for the meaning of his words to become clear to her than a heavy fog to turn purple and transparent on a Japanese hillside under the bright sun. When she did understand the import of his words it struck her like a kick from a muddy boot on her naked heart. She could not speak; her silence awed him and for the first time he stole a glance

at her. Then he saw one of those sights which one carries, without any effort of the memory, to the grave.

"For heaven's sake, don't take it so seriously—so painfully!"

She was not crying; she had not recovered from the blow which stunned her. He took her hand: met that strange, stony look wherein the gods write the sentence of death for a certain set of criminals.

"O, I know I promised to marry you, but you see—" He paused. He seemed to have been deserted by his ever-ready lies. Heaven is just. When he said that he was miserable he told the truth.

"But you see"—pointing to the canvas.

That was a magnificent piece of work—a veritable masterpiece. "You see fame, wealth, adoration of men will be all yours!"

Yes, he did dare say that. It was indeed natural that he was awed by his own audacity.

O Chika's face looked, for a second, like a *shoji* screening a burning room. She rose and walked to the canvas.

“This—do you mean this?” she asked him with a strange voice. The painter could not even nod. With her teeth set, her beautiful face hardening, pale, all in a tremour, she dug her fingers into the canvas. The easel fell. She leaped upon the humiliated canvas; stamped it to tatters. Then, weeping, her hair in disorder, she sunk amid the ruins of her beautiful portrait. The scene went into the heart of the artist.

He took her in his arms and lifted her: “O Chika, O Chika!” Tears were in his eyes. His voice worked upon her like a magic. She pulled him to the divan.

“Oh, forgive me—forgive me! I was mad. O, what have I done!”

She wept, wept, wept.

“Oh, I was all wrong. I should not have hoped for such a great thing. The gods must be angry with me for aspiring to marry you, to make you mine. No, no! It is not your fault, dear beloved. I was to blame. And the beautiful picture! Oh, pardon me—but how can you forgive me?”

When, touched through and through, the painter succeeded in soothing her, she said:

“ Oh, I want you to be happy. Yes, you must marry a good, noble lady of your honourable rank. I was all wrong; forgive me! ”

Seeing that he was very unhappy, she tried all she could to console him. She even smiled.

“ See, I am all right now. I was so silly, wasn’t I? ”

Yes, she joked. And when it sounded like a mockery heaped on her broken, crushed heart, she suppressed a sob.

“ Oh, I shall love you always—will you not let me do that—you will, won’t you? You have been so good to me, honourable beloved.”

Meanwhile the artist, as he but too richly deserved, suffered the torment of the damned.

When he closed his studio in the capital to return to his native town—his bride was waiting for him there—he said he would never return to the city.

Sendai, the birthplace of the artist, saw a very pale bridegroom. He did not paint anything after his return home. He was too busy attending other matters, namely, to deceive his bride (for he wanted her to see how happy he was) and to run away from his memory—to give the lie to facts, or at least to turn them into a dim dream.

In spite of his solemn, emphatic “never” he was seen on the streets of Tokio, or rather in the gay maelstrom of Tokio’s society, in a marvellously short time. All his friends came to congratulate him with sentences that sounded as if they had been on paper four, five, times. And, paying their compliments on the beauty of his bride, some of the more familiar, some of the more careless, of his comrades, often happened to ask him:

“And how is your picture? How is your beautiful model?”

For his friends did not know that Kaga was there in the capital to find out where, how, through what vale of shadows O Chika was passing—and for nothing else.

When his bride was safely out of the reach of his voice he repeated to himself, "How was it I thought that woman charming—that is a miracle!" In those moments he was haunted by the lines and curves and the dream-winged expressions of O Chika, which he had tried and succeeded once to catch in colours on his canvas.

Impatience gave him a rack, and he came to find out the limit of human endurance. He must see!

For three days—so his wife understood him to say—he was obliged to go and see one of his artist friends somewhere in the neighbourhood of Aoyama.

All that time he had been hunting up the friends of O Chika; they told him what they knew of her—that she had disappeared all of a sudden from the "Gold-Cloud-Hall," where she had shone as the star about four months ago. That was just about the time when Kagawa had left Tokio for his home.

He gave up the search—it was no use. Just to keep himself out of the lunatic

asylum he took to his brush. He had carefully collected a few hundred sketches he had made of O Chika, and tried to conjure up upon a canvas once more the girl trying to break off a branch from the spring-smiling cherry. One day he worked far beyond the midnight, and the nirvanic moon hanging on a bough of a pine tree in his yard tempted him out of the studio. As he turned a corner of a hedge he surprised a woman crouching in the shade of it.

“Who’s there?”

The woman tried to run away, and in so doing she exposed her face to the moon. It was just a glimpse that Kagawa saw, but that was enough. He caught her by her sleeve.

O Chika promised him that she would see him to-morrow; gave him her address. He had to believe her; he had no choice—he could not keep her standing there all night.

“Good-bye!” he said, still holding her hand.

She raised her face. The moon kissed the tears in her eyes, her quivering lips

also, and gave romance to the pallor of her cheeks. An artist who would paint the Japanese Madonna ought to have seen her then. Just as soon as she could control her mutinous lips, she said:

“*Sayonara, Sayonara, Kagawa-san!*”

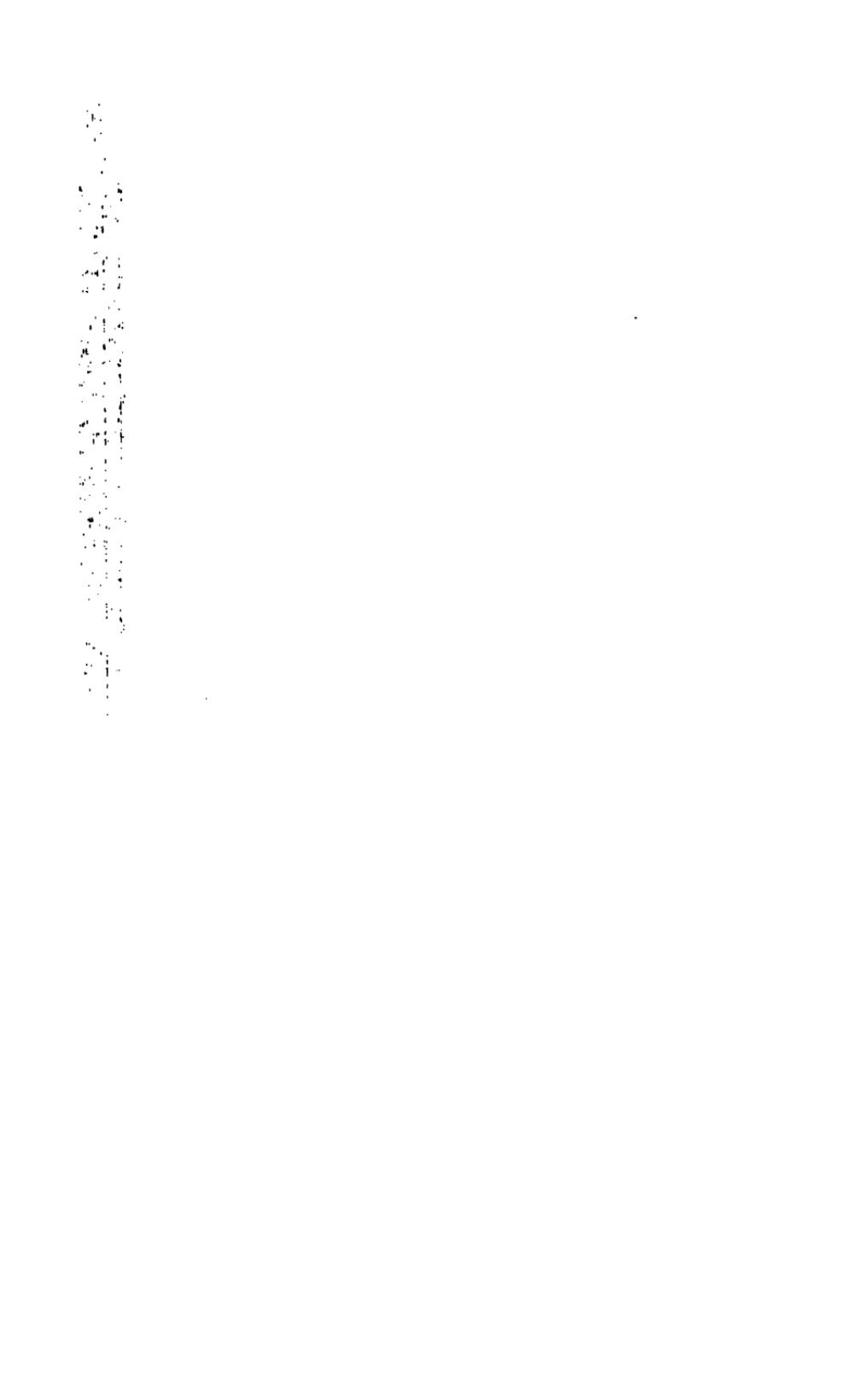
She withdrew her hand from his grasp, walked hurriedly, and, turning the corner of the hedge, disappeared. Where she had stood the silver frost of moonlight alone remained. The echo of her “*Sayonara*” played on all the heart strings of Kagawa; it intoxicated him, made him dizzy—it made him dream. He felt as if he were hearing the echo-strains from the Land of the Lotus.

The morning papers of the next day had the following in bold, dark print:

THE TRAGEDY OF YOTSUYA-
MOAT.

The Charming O Chika, of Gold-Cloud-Hall, is now a Memory!

Sakuma Sukenari



Sakuma Sukenari

The Story of a Japanese Outlaw

I

The godown No. 4, in the palace compound of Yamaguchi, was filled with perhaps the oldest and the choicest treasures of the princely house of Matsudaira. Three officers of the palace were present at the opening of it, and when they found it as empty as a cicada's shell, the colour of their faces changed. They rushed into it—and filled the empty godown with their bewilderment. There was no sign of a thief here, no hint of an ingress or egress that had evidently been made. All the treasures were gone; how? They did not know. Through what hole? That, they could not find. By whom? Heaven only knew.

“Gompachi—Shiro—is that you?”

“What’s that?” whispered the officers among themselves.

“Say, who is there above; is that you, Shiro?” the voice repeated. Evidently it came from under the stone floor of the godown. The officers did not answer. By-and-bye, one of the flags which paved the floor lifted up gently; a man’s head emerged.

“Sakuma Sukenari!”

A palace officer recognised the grey-haired man. Then, all of a sudden he disappeared like the twinkle of a spark. All rushed to the stone and tried to raise it; it did not yield. A moment more, and that portion of the floor gave in. There was a fearful sound of falling bodies, and the still more fearful screams and groans of the doomed men. The floor closed up again over the wall. Then a sound as of the rushing of a mighty stream drowned the complaints of the lost.

The whole clan was aroused at the news. They dug open the entire space whereupon the godown had stood. They found

an immense deep well, and it was full of water. However, after a painstaking search of many days, they could not recover the remains of the palace officers and men.

All this happened in the early autumn, and, as I have said, in Yamaguchi of Choshyu Clan. And Choshyu is one of the southern provinces of Nihon.

II

Sakuma Sukenari looked out from a cave not far from the foot of the mountain, and greeted the death of the day. He was there because he knew that many hundred armed men were out hunting him on the coast of Choshyu, where the southern waves rippled.

All admired him, and most of them loved him. Every one knew that he was a robber; and every one knew that robbery was dishonourable—wrong.

“ Well, I will tell them where I am, the imbeciles! ”

Then shading his eyes, he looked afar. The evening rays were going away from the hillside, and the dust, like soft black rain, was falling upon the Kameyama Castle Town.

"Yes, by to-morrow morning they will find out my whereabouts."

The lonely man smiled again and caressed his sword—this was the one friend that never disappointed him.

III

A little past midnight.

A touch or two on the stone wall, and he was within the enclosure of perhaps the wealthiest house of the town. There was a fortune in that feat, and a cat might with profit have learned something from his agility. At last he reached the principal bedchamber. He ungrooved a *shoji*, and under his magic touch it would not utter a single squeak of protest. He was within the room as gracefully as a sportive fairy.

At the head of the bed, a seed-oil, pith-wick lamp was almost falling asleep over the dreams of things and men.

Suddenly he stopped, and a smile, such as you see on a flower-enamelled field of May, came and untied the last knot of care and made an amusing fun—a rather sad sort of fun it was, too—of that stoic indifference of his face.

A sight—so unexpected, so bright, so unearthly, so innocent, so godlike—met his scrutinising eyes, and the tender humour of the situation quite overwhelmed him.

A baby smiled at him. It held out its bud-like fist, which by-and-bye opened into a flower full of dimples. Sakuma stuck his naked sword into the mat. Stooping down with that gracious pose which was natural to him, and with the sweetest smiles, he acknowledged his defeat on his knees. He was completely, absolutely vanquished.

At that time, when he was putting those ruby petals of the baby hand between his lips, it never occurred to him that, not

quite a year before this, in the town of Wakamatsu, he had treated some thirty armed men, single-handed, to handsome, and, according to those men who had been entertained, miraculous sword-feats. But it was a fact. A hundred men might have attacked him just as well, for it made no difference to Sakuma. And this man, who could fairly dance on the sword-blades of his enemies—and what is more, enjoy the dance—he who had convinced the select men of ten clans by turns that he was a cloud, an apparition, a visitation of an *oni*, a ghost, a *ma*; he whom no iron cables, no prison bars could hold, this genius of a robber was caught. The baby was holding him with its dimpled finger.

Forgetting all—forgetting for what he had broken into the house; forgetting that his visit was rather unexpected on the part of those two people, the master and the mistress of the house who were sleeping there before his eyes; forgetting that he came without any invitation; that the human eyes were not made to sleep on forever; that the night was not going to

last as long as a year—he gathered up the child (and a mother would have loved him just for the manner wherewith he had caught up that baby in his arms), and sitting cross-legged, he began to play with the baby. He made faces at it; for it he twisted his fingers into the shapes of a hundred different animals and flowers and men. Then the baby, raising its fat arms, beat the air as if it wanted to tell him what it had been before it came into this world, and whence it came, and that it had not been away from its former home so long that it had forgot all about the mode of its pre-existence—which, in truth, seemed to be a happier one than that of the present. After winnowing the air vigorously, and seeing itself still in the lap of Sakuma, it opened its large, wonder-pregnant eyes. “Why, in the name of sanity, don’t I rise into the air?” they seemed to query, those eyes. Just then it was evident that the humour of the situation struck its merry understanding.

“Aaaa—aaaa—aaaa—boo—oo—ah—brrrrrrrrr!” it shouted at the top note of

its baby pipe. That jolly note from the baby throat, however, seemed to have aroused a fiend in the sharp eyes of Sakuma. They had been so childlike but a second ago! Now they were as forbidding as winter. He put his finger on the lips of the baby; shot his eyes at the sleepers. They were sound asleep yet. No danger—and his face melted again into an amiable sweetness.

But in a short while, it seemed that the baby was much pleased at the mouse which Sakuma formed out of his fingers and which he made crawl under the arms of the child. The baby appreciated the treatment noisily, and with a vehement enthusiasm. This time the shrill scream was so loud that Sakuma bit his lips, rose with a start, made a rush toward the sword he had stuck in the mat. Even that, however, did not disturb the wonderfully sinless sleepers. And when he saw himself safe again, the ridiculousness of his situation came upon him and shook every bone in him in a silent convulsion of laughter.

All of a sudden he stopped laughing.

Sharply he turned his eyes on the sleeping woman. The mother was singing a lullaby—sweet, plaintive, dreamy. She was still sleeping; but somehow the cry of the child was heard by her, and she was singing, trying to soothe it to sleep with the melody.

Sakuma looked at the woman till he could see no more because of the blinding tears. He still held the baby in his arms. Many things came into his head. He, too, had a home once. Yes, his wife was with him, then. He also had a girl baby—twenty-two years ago! His wife went ahead of him to meet her Buddha, for as young as she was, her heart was pure enough to see the holy lord. He lost his baby daughter in a festival crowd. And now his hair had turned grey, and after taxing to the utmost the sagacity of his brain—which the people declared to be either that of a demon or simply a miracle—in search of the lost child, and after twenty-two years, he could not find as much as a suspicion of a trace of her.

“Time was when I was the model of de-

voted husbands, when I was loved by a woman lily-pure and lovely as a smile, when I was perfectly happy!"—so he told the baby in a whisper. He confided many more secrets to it. And the little confessor took in, without the least alarm, all the astounding revelations of the greatest robber of the age.

Providence willed that this touching scene should not go on forever, and on the ice-edged air was heard the first matin of a cock.

They were very quick, his movements—a little more adroit than the nervousness of electric flashes. But the baby could not understand why Sakuma should leave it on the mat, since it had such a jolly time on his lap.

"A—aaa—ahiiiiii!" it cried to him.

"*Sayonara!*" he said, politely, to the baby. "Good-night, Innocence!"

He waved his hand at it. But at the parting he weakened. Well, he wanted a little souvenir which would recall to him—in after-days of worry and torment—this night which came to him as unex-

pectedly as a patch of sunny sky in the dead of night.

Oh, how he would have loved to carry that baby away with him! He faltered. He knew that dawn would whiten on him very soon, and yet if he were to hesitate a few moments more he would be forced to spur his beloved steed to death in order to save his life.

There stood a treasure chest on the top of the bureau. He slipped it under his arm. Bowing sweetly to the baby, as a gentleman of court bidding a farewell to his lady-love, he took a few steps away, his eyes still reluctant upon the child.

The baby stretched forth its hands.

“Aboo—aboo—oo!” it said, and at once falling on all fours crawled toward Sakuma. It stopped: looked at him. Sakuma did not come toward it, and then clouds and storm fell upon the little dimpled face.

How could he leave it? Of course he went back to it.

“Dear one,” he whispered, “*sayonara!*” He took it up in his arms once again. He pressed, in a long caress, its soft pink

cheeks against his, weather-beaten and callous. It felt so tender to him.

Then the mother turned in her sleep with a faint groan.

Like an apparition he was gone!

IV

There were a few gold and silver coins in the treasure chest. As was his wont, he would dole them to the freezing and the starving. The lonely life he led gave him the habit of soliloquising:

“Poor wretches—they must be freezing to death, this icy day.”

Then he took out a *mamoribukuro*, and a *mamoribukuro* is a small embroidered sack worn on the girdle of a child, wherein an *o-fuda*, a sacred card of a guardian deity, is kept along with the address of its parents.

Sakuma threw it out on the ground absent-mindedly. And then took it up again with a smile.

“The baby’s!” he said, brightening.

“I’ll keep it as a memento!” But when his attention was struck with its old, worn-out condition, he looked at it again. Suddenly he leaped up with it; looked around as a squirrel with a nut, and then at once opened the sack—his fingers all in a tremour, and impatience burning his eyes.

Yes, he was sure of it—the recognition came like a flash—he had given this to his little daughter twenty years ago. Inside it was the sacred card of the guardian deity of his native town—but of course there was no address. Might he yet be mistaken? He looked at it again. No, there is that family crest wrought with silk within a fold where none could see.

“What, what, what!”

This cynic, this misanthrope, this rider of the most perilous adventures, he who had always been stone-calm at the very fury-vortex of events, this man was in a flutter of excitement like a girl of fifteen at the death of her lover!

And all this for no other reason than that old *mamoribukuro*. He wanted to

thank heaven—and tears were cascading his cheeks—and at the same time he was, in his heart, cursing the gods for keeping his daughter away from him so long.

“That was she, then, that mother!”

He was as happy as if he had read his name on the golden roll in the blessed Lotus-Land of the holy Buddhas. “And the baby my grandchild!” It was too much—it quite melted him.

So his daughter, lost on that festival of long ago, was stolen by some one. She was brought up by heaven alone knows whom, and now she was the wife of a wealthy *chonin*!

V

At last! at last! he had seen his lost daughter. And as he sat in a little, mountain-deep deserted shrine of Jido at the foot of Atago Mountain, he recalled the oath he had made to the gods. It was to the effect that as soon as he would find his

lost child safe and happy he would offer his life on an altar. And now since the gods had led him—although it was after many, many weary years—to his life-desire and prayer, there seemed but one path for his feet to tread. Moreover, he was feeling the weight of snow that was on his head a little too heavy, in spite of all his brilliant wit.

He robbed the rich enormously, and giving everything to the poor, lived himself the severe and simple life of an anchorite. The law of the land could not for a moment tolerate any such crime, and so it sent many an army of men after him. And, to tell the truth, those men afforded him many pleasant diversions.

Now that his days were numbered, he should be seated peacefully in front of the shrine, like a pious grandfather who had spent all his life in domestic beatitude about a hearth. Thus at the close of his ripe age he would start out on a pious pilgrimage, that he might die on his way to a sacred temple of a holy Buddha. This, they say, is the most blessed of

deaths, seeing that such pilgrims shall find the shortest cut to the Holy Land of the Absolute Bliss. His mind was made up. He would die in peace, and yet—

Wealthy, but she was now the wife of a *chonin*; she had been a daughter of a *samurai*. Ah, if he could but see her a *samurai!* This last wish of his was the greatest, and since he knew that he could never see it fulfilled in his lifetime, this was the most pathetic of his longings as well—nevertheless, it was not an absolute despair with him.

In fact, he knew by heart what the placards were publishing abroad at almost every entrance of every city, town, village, or shrine, and at every crossing of country roads.

His death—and perhaps that alone—would bring about the sole and the greatest longing of his heart. What a happy death he was going to die after all! A smile came and made his face look kindly, as the ripples make the deep, solemn, awful ocean playful.

“Oh, daughter!” he stretched out his

arms. The passion of fatherhood was sweeping him off his feet.

Oh, just to clasp her once in his arms—and to tell her what he was to her; what she was to him, just once—to be recognised by her—to claim that baby with whom he had played the night before, as his own, as his grandchild! He would have given three kingdoms; his life three times over for it. But, no! That could never be. And since it could not be—They say it is harder to conquer one's self than to take a walled city. Indeed, there is no comparison at all.

But, at any rate, he must see her—when she was awake and in the full light of day. Life or death—he must! How? His brain, as I have said, was very fertile.

With the shower of the earliest rays the next morning, there fell—straight out of heaven, to all appearance—a mendicant before the gate of the wealthy *chonin*.

A servant girl responded to him with a handful of rice.

“As the reward of many meritorious acts of this household,” said the pious

voice, "the Buddhas are pleased to give the master of the family a token of their approval. Tell him, at the break of day to-morrow, to hasten to a little shrine of Jido under the pine tree at the foot of Atago Mountain, beyond the village of Hozu."

He walked away a few steps, and then, as if he had forgot something, he turned round and came back to the gate.

"Is there a child in the family that the humble mendicant could bless?"

"Oh, yes, august priest."

The maid brought out a baby in her arms.

"The humble one would rather bless it in its mother's arms," said the mendicant.

After a while, when a young mother came out, the deep shading *kasa* (a mushroom-shaped hat) of the priest tilted a little.

It was a long, lingering blessing, in a voice that trembled with emotion. It was as reluctant as a lover's farewell. It was as moving as the last song of a bird that is dying.

The mother, very much touched and pleased with it all, added a few more sacks of rice and coin to the contribution. But when the mendicant wiped, very hastily, with all the nervous awkwardness of embarrassment, something off his cheeks, the mother wondered.

The mendicant again started to depart. A few steps, and once more he was back and addressed the mother:

“To-morrow, early in the morning, before the sun, if your honourable husband were to go to a neglected little shrine of Jido at the foot of Atago Mountain, on the Hozu road——”

“Yes, august priest, the humble one knows the shrine,” the mother told him.

“There—let him go there, and the Buddhas have prepared a reward of the meritorious for him, and his heart will be made glad of that token of approval from the Lord Buddha.”

The mother, hearing the solemn voice of the holy man, wondered again at its meaning.

VI

As the wealthy *chonin* turned into the shrine of Jido, at the gate of it he read the ever-present placard:

“Whoever shall deliver into the hand of authority, Sakuma Sukenari, an outlaw, alive or dead, renders a service to State. In recognition of the merits thereof, for the maintenance of peace in the land, he will be raised to the rank of *samurai* with the annuity of 3,000 *koku*, and will be made a retainer of the lord of Kameyama Clan.

“The prince will be pleased to honour him with the gift of a sword.”

To this was added a minute description of the robber, more famous than princes.

Under the sacred cedar tree, close to the entrance of the inner shrine, there was a man bowing over his naked sword. The *chonin* walked up to him; stopped short, and examined him from a distance.

“Dead!” he gasped, and jumped away.

However, curiosity compelled his second glance over his shoulder. At the right-hand side of the dead man he saw a treasure chest.

“What!”

Yes, it was his—it had been stolen the night previous. How did it happen that it found its way to this out-of-world shrine of Jido? Naturally his spirit of investigation got the upper hand of him. As he reached down to lift the chest his eyes fell upon the characters traced on the sands of the shrine court in front of the dead man:

“I am Sakuma Sukenari, the noted robber. Examine my face!”

“So it was he who broke into my house last night!” he said, with satisfaction. Then he thought of the great reward offered by the lord of the clan for the head of the outlaw.

He thought: “It was by the punishment of the Buddhas that the robber at last was caught!” Pious meditations filled his heart, and tears his eyes. He seized the head of the dead by its snow locks and lifted it up. It was he. There were those

scars, one over the left eye and the other across the left cheek. His massive chin and his mouth, which was an emphatic line of firmness, bulldoggishness, power—every particular given in the placard was there. But as the *chonin* lifted up the head of the robber he saw upon his lap a *mamori-bukuro*, made of brocade, and which was very familiar to him. It had belonged to his wife, and she had given it to the baby. So the outlaw was stupid enough to look for the treasure in a bag where the card of a guardian deity is kept! He laughed to himself and speculated on the doltishness of the world in general. What a joke! So they thought that this wretch was the sharpest of human wits!

VII

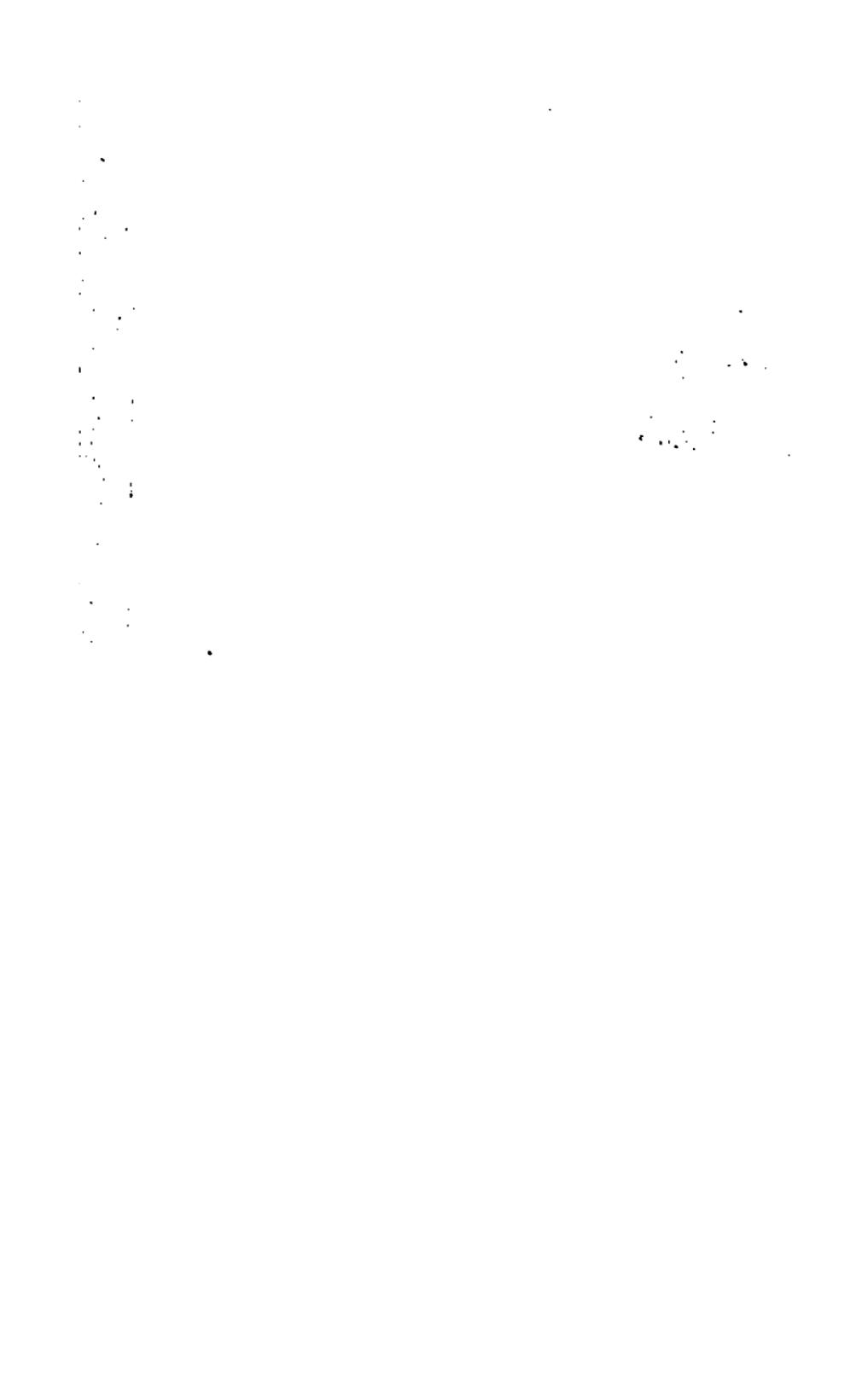
At home, when he told his wife all the circumstances of the discovery, she became very tearfully pious, and there was much praying in the household.

The stray orphan, whom the wealthy merchant married for her beauty and personal charms, died a wife of a *samurai*; but she never found out who her parents were.











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